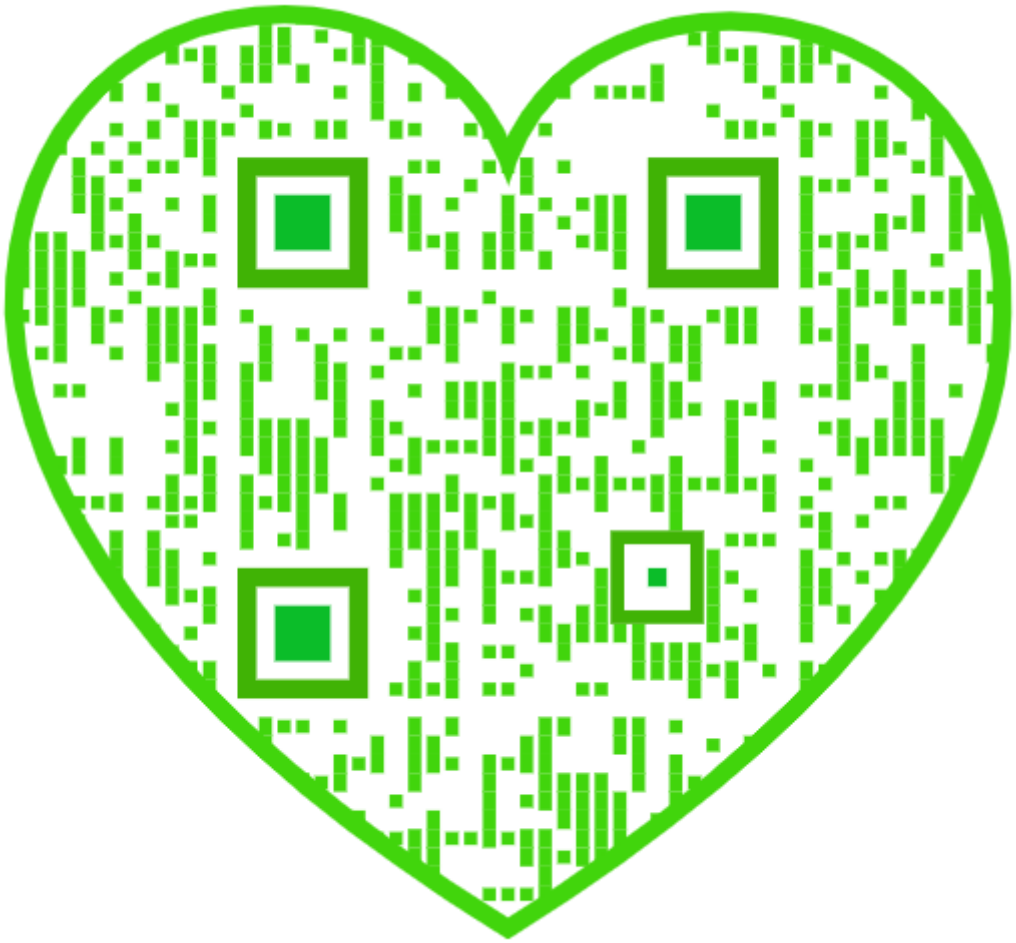

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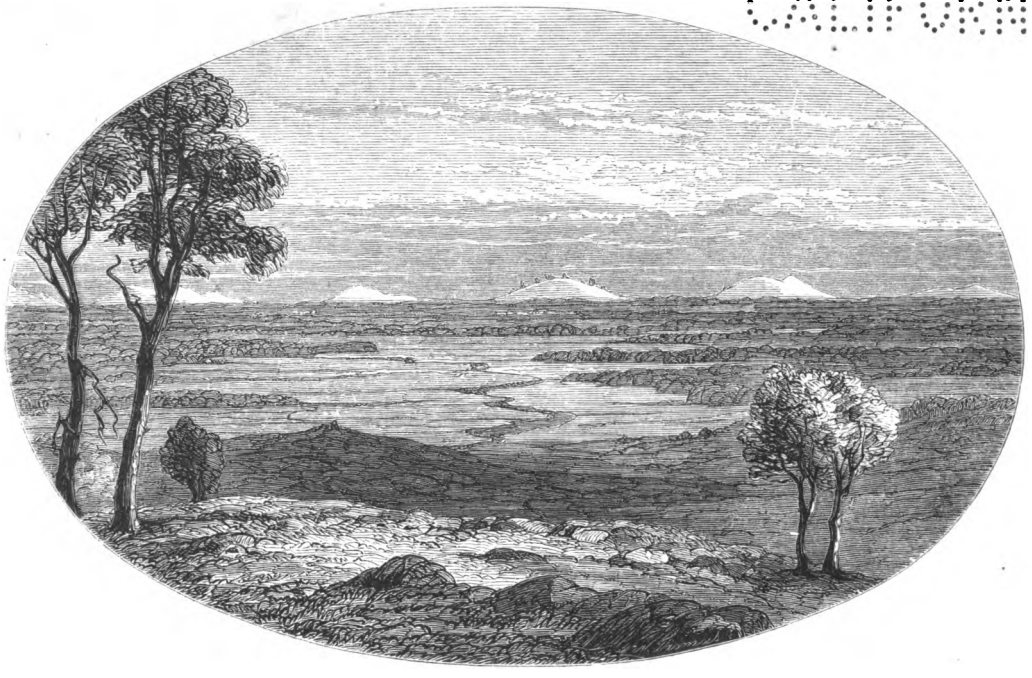

VIEW OF VOLCANIC HILLS AND PLAIN, NORTH OF THE BALLARAT GOLD FIELD.

The centre hill, Mount Lyell, has a small well-like crater at the summit.

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THE

GOLDEN COLONY:

OR

VICTORIA IN 1854.

WITH REMARKS ON THE GEOLOGY OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOLD FIELDS.

BY

GEORGE HENRY WATHEN,
AUTHOR OF "ARTS, ANTIQUITIES, AND CHRONOLOGY OF ANCIENT EGYPT."

ILLUSTRATED FROM ORIGINAL SKETCHES BY THE AUTHOR, WITH MAP, ETC.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.
1855.

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PREFACE.

How difficult is it by mere reading to obtain any vivid impression of a remote land, whose climate, landscape, and vegetation, are all unlike our own. The tables and returns of the statist, however valuable in themselves, will here render us very little aid. The rough and rapid pencil of the clever tourist may strike off truthful images of the details, but cannot pretend to offer any picture of the whole. On the other hand, general descriptions are too vague and shadowy to impress any life-like images on the mental retina. Thus, on landing on a distant shore, your first hour's ramble will often leave a more faithful, as well as ineffaceable impression, than could have been obtained by a painful perusal of a score of volumes. These remarks apply with more than ordinary force to our Antipodean Colonies, where for thousands of years Nature has held on her course almost as free from the modifying influences of human agency as in the long ages antecedent to man's appearance on our world; those ages whose records, written on the rocks and the mountains, have been revealed and read by Modern Geology.

But while all books treating on distant lands are subject to these inherent deficiencies, they may still be of great value. If the images conveyed are less vivid, on the other hand the information is, or ought to be, more precise. Facts are collected, collated, and generalised;

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and the aspect and condition of the country brought out more distinctly by contrasting it with other lands. Besides, all cannot be travellers; and the intending emigrant will generally wish to learn something of the region about to form his new home.

As regards the writer of this little work, his residence at the mines and journeys through various parts of the country have given him unusual facilities for acquiring some general acquaintance with its landscape and its geology, and of marking the various phases of colonial life. He has also, and with the greatest interest, watched first the discovery, and then the gradual development, of those wonderful Gold Fields which have made Victoria second only to India in the long list of the colonial possessions of Great Britain.

The illustrations are all from sketches taken on the spot, and with more regard to truthfulness than to mere pictorial effect. They were selected from the writer's sketch-book as expressing the characteristic features of Victorian landscape and geology, and the pursuits of the mining population.

Important and very significant events have been agitating the public mind at Melbourne and at the Gold Fields during the latter months of the past year. Intelligence of these has reached England while the following pages were passing through the press, and some notice of them has been incorporated in the text; so that the volume may be regarded as a picture of the Golden Colony at the end of the year 1854.

LONDON,
February 28. 1855.

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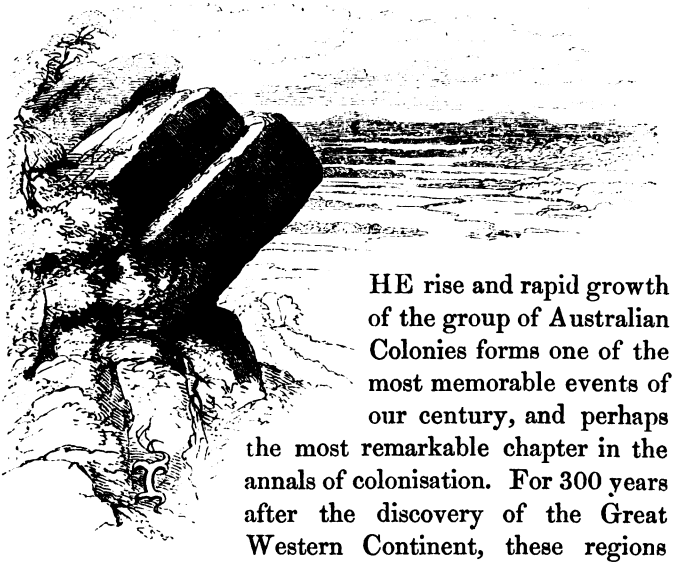
THE

GOLDEN COLONY.

CHAPTER I.

VICTORIA COMPARED WITH THE ADJACENT COLONIES.



THE rise and rapid growth of the group of Australian Colonies forms one of the most memorable events of our century, and perhaps the most remarkable chapter in the annals of colonisation. For 300 years after the discovery of the Great Western Continent, these regions remained almost unknown, and rarely visited, except by ships despatched on expeditions of discovery by the mari-

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time powers of Europe. Situated in the midst of the great world of waters that occupies by far the larger part of the Southern Hemisphere, they seemed quietly biding their time, till the great wave of civilisation, in its onward course from east to west, should reach their solitary shores. The beginning of the present century witnessed the first signals of its approach. The Anglo-Saxon race,—the great modern pioneers of civilisation and Christianisation in the Northern Hemisphere,—were destined by Providence to the same work in the Southern; and in a few years busy hives of European industry had established themselves on the east, south, and west coasts of New Holland (as it was then called), and in the neighbouring island of Van Diemen's Land. First, Sydney was settled on the eastern shores, as a penal settlement, and the capital of the new colony of New South Wales. Next, Hobart Town was founded in Van Diemen's Land. The Swan River settlement followed on the western coast of Australia; and this alone may be said to have failed, having dragged on a precarious existence up to the present time. Finally, Adelaide and Melbourne were founded on the southern coast; the latter as the chief town of "Port Phillip," then a dependency of the Sydney Government, but, since the year 1851, erected into an independent colony.

On comparing these colonies with each other, we are struck with these two facts: first,—Victoria, the most recently established, has outstripped all the others in wealth, commerce, and material prosperity; second,—of all the Australasian colonies, Victoria alone has received no fostering care from the mother country. Not one shilling has been expended upon this colony, except what has been

levied within it. Nay, more; during its earlier years, on the plea of its being a dependent province of New South Wales, large sums were drafted from this settlement, and spent on the sister colony.

The chief cause of this unparalleled success must, doubtless, be referred to the extraordinary internal resources and natural advantages which the country possesses. Indeed, on few lands have these blessings been lavished with so free a hand.

On looking at the map we first notice that Victoria is, geographically, the centre of the Australian group; Melbourne being about midway between Sydney, Adelaide, and Hobart Town. In regard to internal sources of wealth, it has extensive tracts of fertile lands waiting and ready for the plough, or, under a rough tillage, yielding the most abundant harvests. It has its vast plains, admirably adapted for pastoral pursuits, where millions of fine fleeced sheep may roam and thrive, producing a wool highly prized in the European markets, and affording a staple export of enormous value. It has its gold mines of unequalled richness, both in quality and extent, and producing a yearly yield such as eclipses those golden harvests which prompted and followed the Spanish conquests in South America, and excited the envy of all Europe. It boasts, indeed, but one great navigable river; but, by way of compensation, it possesses extraordinary facilities for the construction of railways. During a part of the year it is deficient in the supply of water; but then the structure of the country at once suggests and aids the formation of artificial reservoirs, by means of damming up the valleys and river channels. Lastly, it has a climate which, with

much that is disagreeable, is still one of the finest in the world, free from the damps and mists of England; and where those pestilential exhalations that hang treacherously over some of the fairest valleys of Italy are so wholly unknown that you may live with perfect security on the margin of an extensive swamp.

Thus the geographical position of this district, its natural resources, and its past history, all seem to point it out as the central seat of civilisation and material greatness amongst the South Pacific colonies; and if any augury may be gathered from the past, great things are written down for Victoria in the inscrutable Book of the Future.

CHAPTER II.

VICTORIA.—BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE COUNTRY.

Boundaries—Main mountain chain of Australia—Highest summit—Mountain zone of Victoria running East and West—Lowlands along the coast—Lowlands North of mountains—The Murray and its affluents—Southern rivers—Port Phillip Bay—Gipps Land—Scrubby solitudes—Western Port—Melbourne Plains—The Western volcanic Plains—"Dead Men's Graves"—Domical Lava Hills—Forests of Cape Otway—Country North of the mountain barrier—Creeks and water-holes—Navigation of the Murray—The "Mallee-Scrub."

EVERY traveller knows that on arriving at a new district, or in a large city, the best method of obtaining a general idea of the whole is to ascend a lofty tower, and thence to take note of the leading features of the city, or district, as they are mapped out far below. I propose to adopt a similar plan. In attempting to convey to the reader some general notion of the outward appearance and physical geography of Victoria, I would in imagination conduct him to some highly elevated position, such as might be attained by a balloon, and from this aërial point of view would at first point out the most prominent features of the country,—the great mountain chains, plains, and rivers. We will then explore the country somewhat more in detail.

Victoria may be briefly described as the most southerly of the group of Australian colonies, bounded on the west

by the so-called "South Australia,"* on the east by New South Wales, on the north by the unsettled territory of the same colony, on the south by the Pacific Ocean. It consists of Victoria Proper, and Gipps Land, east of the former.

From our imaginary position we should see, towards the N. E., a great chain of lofty mountains rising at Mount Kosciusko to the height of 6510 feet above the sea level.† This is the most remarkable feature, and the culminating ridge of the island-continent of Australia, so far as is known. It runs from N. E. to S. W., nearly parallel to the coast, and is called the Australian Alps. To the south it sends out its spurs and advanced posts to the sea, rising into a bold mountain ridge at Wilson's Promontory, the most southerly point of Australia. Gipps Land is a maritime province shut in by this wall of mountains on the north and west, and thus cut off from the rest of the colony. From this main chain a vast mountain zone sweeps round inland and westward to Portland Bay, at the opposite extremity of the colony, dividing the whole into two parts: first, the lowlands stretching from the base of the mountains to the sea; second, the great northern plains. This mountain zone consists of many separate and sometimes almost isolated ranges.

On the western side of Port Phillip Bay, or midway along the coast line, it advances its spurs to the sea, and here the granitic hill "Station Peak," rises with a long

* It may be well to remind the reader that "South Australia" is not really the most southerly of the Australian colonies. It was so until Victoria was constituted an independent province. The sooner this false nomenclature is mended the better.

† See Map of Victoria, p. 8.

sweep out of the lava plain that borders the bay. Hence the lowlands south of the mountain barrier are subdivided into three portions: first, Gipps Land, to the east; second, the tracts around Port Phillip and Western Port Bays; the third, more varied and broken, extends from the Station Peak ranges westward to the neighbourhood of Portland Bay. The northern slopes of the great inland chain sink into a vast, boundless plain, scarcely varied by any elevation. Through this expanse, equal in area, according to the Governor of South Australia, to seven Great Britains, winds the great river Murray with its affluents, the Edward, the Murrumbidgee, the Goulburn, the Loddon, and innumerable other less important and more unpronounceable names. All the rivers which flow north of the main chain (including most of the large streams of the colony) ultimately meet in the Murray, which, rising in New South Wales, flows through Victoria, and enters the sea in South Australia. Of the southern rivers, the Yarra Yarra flows into Port Phillip Bay near Melbourne: the Barwon approaches within a mile of the bay at Geelong, but, bending off, enters the sea a few miles further along the coast. The Glenelg drains the western district, and at its mouth forms the boundary between Victoria and South Australia.

Even in this rapid survey we must devote a few words to the Cape Otway country. On looking to the west of Port Phillip Bay will be seen a broad, blunt promontory, terminating in Cape Otway. This promontory is occupied by hills of no great height, but broken up by deep ravines, and densely covered with trees of almost incredible dimensions. The forest covers the whole coast, and ex-

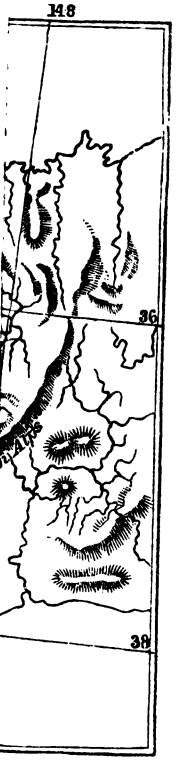
tends down to within a quarter of a mile of the sea, sometimes to the beach itself. These dreary, inhospitable shores are usually the first land made by ships bound to Melbourne, and are not calculated to brighten the anticipations of the exile.

One of the most remarkable features in our bird's-eye view of the colony is the great inland basin, or harbour, about midway along the southern coast. Port Phillip Bay (as it is now called) which once gave its name to the whole territory, is a magnificent harbour not second to any in the world. It is circular, about fifty miles in diameter, receding into bays and coves, sheltered by projecting headlands, and communicating with the open sea by a channel about a mile wide. Here all the navies of the world might safely ride at anchor. At the head of the bay, or at its northern extremity, stands the infant metropolis of the colony, Melbourne, with its 100,000 souls. At the western end, on a beautiful little bay that may almost compare with Naples, is Geelong, which boasts its 25,000 inhabitants. A narrow neck of land separates Port Phillip Bay from another large marine basin to the east, called Western Port Bay, nearly filled by two large islands.

Having thus, from our imaginary station, noted down the prominent features of the country, and got a skeleton view of the whole, we may now descend to obtain a more exact knowledge of the several parts.

Beginning at the east, we have Gipps Land. But of Gipps Land there is little to be said, because very little is known, except to its few scattered inhabitants. The representative of this district in the Legislative Council,

PLATE II.



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in moving for certain statistical returns, declared his belief that the Government knew nothing of Gipps Land.

Alberton, the chief town, has a very indifferent harbour; and this has proved an effectual bar to the advance of the district. It is watered by numerous large streams, rising in the lofty and broken ranges of the Australian Alps to the north of the province. It is a land admirably adapted for the grazing of cattle, which form its chief export. The climate is humid. This is almost the sum of our knowledge of Gipps Land.

Between Gipps Land and Western Port, passing west along the coast, stretches a wild tract almost unknown, made up of thick forest, tangled scrub, and impassable swamp. Vast numbers of wild cattle, escaped from the herds of the settlers, roam these intricate solitudes, unmolested and unclaimed. If occasionally startled by the rare sight of a lonely traveller, they dash off into the heart of the forest. From this centre they may, perhaps, in the course of years spread themselves over the whole interior of Australia.

Western Port Bay is somewhat smaller than Port Phillip. It is nearly encircled with mountains which, on the east, approach to within a mile or less of the coast. On the north they sweep off inland, but the intervening country is occupied by a vast desolate swamp, which receives their drainage. The ranges between this basin and Gipps Land are broken, rugged, intricate — covered with thick forest, the trees of which are netted together by a tangled undergrowth of shrubs and hardy creepers: a dreadful country to the luckless traveller who is entangled in its wild mazes. The enterprising and inde-

fatigable Count Strzelecki, with a party of followers, forced his way through this wilderness from Gipps Land to Western Port, but almost perished in the attempt. Having been compelled to abandon his baggage, he arrived jaded, exhausted, and almost famished on the settlements around Western Port Bay. These ranges now bear his name.

Passing westward, we arrive at a more inviting country. Here gentle undulating hills and plains, lightly timbered, watered with *creeks* or brooks, and occasionally opening into green glades and plains, offer many a pleasant site for the settler's homestead, and furnish fine pasturage for his flocks and herds. In the district north of Melbourne a deep, rich, black soil, formed out of a decomposed lava, invites the labours of the agriculturist, and gives him a rich return. These fertile plains are free from timber, but the surface is often encumbered with large blocks of lava, which must first be removed before the land can be traversed by the plough. All the tracts now described are shut in on the north by the great mountain barrier before alluded to, which here constitutes several distinct ranges of hills known as the *Dandenong*, the *Yarra*, and the *Plenty* ranges. The lowlands, north of Melbourne, are diversified by numerous picturesque isolated granite hills, which at once enrich and vary the landscape, and form delightful stations from whence the eye can sweep over the neighbouring country, the view to the north being always bounded by the dense forests that clothe and cap the mountain barrier, while the waters of Port Phillip Bay gleam far to the south.

Proceeding on our survey to the west, we reach a dis-

trict which, as highly characteristic of this part of Australia, deserves a more elaborate description. There is always an intimate connection between the geological phenomena of a country and its physical geography, industrial pursuits, and social condition. But nowhere is this connection more remarkable than in Victoria. Of the entire country it may be said that one half of it is the product of subterranean igneous agency; that is, that one half of the surface is covered with igneous products. Victoria has been the seat of an extraordinary, wide-spread, and intense volcanic action, which, though now dormant, has left monuments of perhaps unexampled extent and grandeur. Directly dependent upon these phenomena are all those peculiarities of soil and surface which render this country unequalled in its capabilities for the pursuits of the sheep farmer. Another result of this same igneous action, the proofs of which are more recondite though not less complete, is the existence of those rich auriferous deposits which, for a time, rendered Victoria the world's magnet, and, in the course of two or three years, made Melbourne one of the great commercial emporiums of the world. But to return to our survey.

On the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay, and girt round with mountains to the north and west, stretch the Melbourne Plains, the seat of long extinct volcanic fires, extending about thirty miles from east to west, and twenty-five from the mountains to the sea. We may obtain a good panoramic view of the whole by ascending Mount Aitkin, a lofty volcanic hill rising on the southern skirts of the mountain chain, not very far from Mount Macedon. The view from this elevation, at sunset, is one

of the most impressive in the colony,—I might almost say in the world; for I have seen the most celebrated scenes in the Old World. The vast silent plain stretches far and wide, here and there rising into rocky knolls, and chequered with the shadows of passing clouds. In the midst rises Mount Cotterell, a few hundred feet high, sweeping out of the plain with a long low outline, like an ocean wave after a storm: near to it is a smaller similar hill. In the middle ground, or near the base of the mountains, several isolated volcanic hills rise with sweeping outlines out of the plain, terminating in craggy crests resembling the curl of a breaking wave. To the west the plain is shut in by the bold granitic hills of Station Peak; its southern margin is washed by the waters of Port Phillip Bay. Here and there are seen irregular black patches of timber. Dark lines may be traced winding over the plain: these are the bands of trees and foliage that accompany the channels of the rivers and creeks. If the latter are not thus fringed by timber, their course cannot be traced, as they commonly flow in deep clefts and ravines scooped out of the rocky plain. The towers of Melbourne can be just descried on a rise in the plain about twenty-five miles to the south-east. A breathless silence reigns over the desolate expanse, and an intense feeling of solitude moves the depths of the soul. Whoever has stood on one of the lonely eminences of the Roman Campagna, and gazed upon that silent depopulated waste, may better imagine the scene I have attempted to describe; its vast expanse, chequered with long-drawn shadows, its delicate hues mellowing into the purple distance, and, above all, its unutterable solitude and silence.

This great plain is admirably adapted for depasturing

sheep. A large portion is rough and rocky, where the currents of lava have not yet become coated over with earth; that part, however, which lies nearer the base of the mountains has a fine light red soil.

Crossing the Anaki, or Station Peak, Hills, westward, we reach the confines of another immense volcanic or trappean plain, extending almost uninterruptedly 200 miles from east to west, commencing near Geelong. Out of this expanse rise several volcanic hills. Usually steep and abrupt on one side, and sweeping down to the plain on the other, they resemble islands rising out of the ocean. Mount Boninyong differs from these in rising, not out of the plain, but out of the mountain ranges, and in having a distinctly marked crater. Mount Boninyong is close to the rich Ballarat gold-field.

These volcanic plains, so characteristic of the country, are not dead levels, nor does their surface or soil present one uniform character. Here and there they rise into long, low, flattened ridges, — the summit often rough and rocky. Extensive tracts are covered with rocky protuberances, or with large loose stones. Here the long ridges and mounds are more marked, and are known as "Stony Rises." Land of this kind was rated low by the early settlers; but it is now understood that for a sheep-run it is second to none, the grass being sweet and the soil dry, while the loose stones retain the moisture beneath them during the summer heats. Other large tracts of the plains are free from stones; but the surface presents a phenomenon peculiar, I believe, to this country, and not very easy to explain. Large flat areas, hundreds or even thousands of acres in extent, are covered with oval

mounds and corresponding hollows,—resembling a vast graveyard of giants. Such tracts are known as "Dead Men's Graves," or "Bay of Biscay Land." Here the soil is a hard, stiff clay: during the rainy season every hollow is filled with water; but you may pass amongst them by stepping from mound to mound. No trees will grow here. In the winter these plains become bleak, dreary wastes: in the summer, parched and dry, they are scantily covered with a meagre, withered, and worthless grass.

While describing these plains, I ought to allude to what the settlers have named "buck-shot." This is a kind of black gravel, mingled with the soil to the depth of a few inches, and consisting of small, irregular-shaped stones, about the size of a pea or of a small bean. This, though not universally diffused, is found over large areas. It may perhaps be a volcanic ash.

To the north of Mount Boninyong, and almost girt round with rocky granite hills and wooded ranges, is a tract which, from the beauty of the scenery and the luxuriance of the vegetation, might well be called the garden of Victoria.* Numerous domical lava hills rise in pairs, or in groups, out of this undulating park-like country, to the height of two or three hundred feet. Destitute of trees and shrubs, but clothed with the richest pasturage, they stand out conspicuous and isolated, and have obtained the characteristic name of "Bald Hills." Below, the country is beautifully wooded with clumps and groves, leaving green lawns and glades between. The soil, both on plain and hill, is a reddish or chocolate-coloured earth, formed out of decomposing lava, fragments of which are seen on

* See Frontispiece.

the hill-tops, red, cellular, and often curled up like pieces of recent lava. From the summit of one of these I have counted no less than twenty-four similar bald hills within a radius of a few miles. I shall have more to say about them when speaking of the geology of Victoria, in a future chapter. They are at once so common and so distinctive a feature of the country, that "bald hills" are quite household words in the vernacular of the country; while the basalt of the plains has become familiar under the name of "blue-stone."

Both the Melbourne plains and those to the north and west of Geelong are shut in on the north by the great east and west mountain barrier, forming several distinct chains, and bearing separate names. One of the most conspicuous of those that encircle the plains of Melbourne is Mount Macedon, which, towering up out of the lower ranges with a steep escarpment, forms a marked feature from the city and out at sea. More to the west is Mount Blackwood, the highest point of a broken, mountainous, and almost impassable region. Proceeding westward, the most remarkable elevations are Mount Misery, Mount Cole (the converging point of the ranges of the Pyrenees), and Mount William, the culminating point of the Grampians.

Immediately contiguous to Geelong, are the Barrabool Hills, of inconsiderable extent, but admirably adapted for tillage; the soil rich, and free from timber. A low bar of fertile hills separates this part of Port Phillip Bay from the open ocean.

To the west of Cape Otway, the principal settlements on the coast are Portland and Belfast, the latter being better known as Port Fairy. Here are open roadsteads and

small flourishing towns. I have not visited this part of the colony, and know but little of it. The land around Port Fairy, however, is generally extolled as some of the most fertile in Victoria.

I have already alluded to Cape Otway and its forests. Here the enormous gum-trees tower up 300 feet high: their colossal trunks are united by a tangled net-work of underwood. The deep ravines are often bridged over by fallen trees, which, felled by the wind and by bush-fires, render it almost impossible to force a way through the labyrinth. The climate is moist, like that of Western Port, and ferns and fern-trees luxuriate in the dank misty hollows and watercourses. This wonderful forest is rarely traversed, and almost unknown. To the settler it is valueless; but, as an almost exhaustless depository of fuel, it may yet prove of high importance to the colony.

We have now completed our rapid survey of the country lying south of the mountain zone, which, running east and west, gives a north and south drainage to this part of the continent. On crossing to the northern side of the water-shed, the structure of the country becomes too complex to admit of verbal description without great detail. The Mount Alexander ranges, the Pyrenees, and the Grampians are the leading chains; besides which, there are countless inferior ranges and detached hills. The broad tracts intervening between these main sedimentary chains are occupied by plains of lava and basalt. Vast sheets of lava, emitted apparently at numerous vents, appear to have filled up all the original valleys, and flowed up into the mountains between the spurs, which now form promontories and headlands. The flow of lava does not overlap the

flanks of the mountains, but terminates abruptly with a steep escarpment, the intervening hollow between this and the hill-side generally forming the bed of a creek. There are large tracts in which the fundamental rocks disappear under a thick mass of stratified drift and alluvium. These, as well as the mountains themselves, are covered with forests. The ranges are rocky and sterile, but the broad green valleys which intersect them are well fitted for the plough. Every valley has its creek or rivulet; and though these are commonly dried up during the summer months, yet the chains of "water-holes" which they form along their course generally furnish an unfailing supply of pure water, and form the favourite points for the settler's homestead.

A very large proportion of these mountain ranges consist of slaty rocks, very similar to those of North Wales and Cumberland, but differing from these in being intersected by a countless number of veins of quartz, varying from the thickness of a shilling to several feet in width. The hills are strewn over with fragments of such veins, which sometimes form a white glistening gravel of quartz. It is on the lower slopes of these wooded ranges, and along the green flats of the valleys, that the gold digger plies his laborious trade; for here lie buried the golden treasures which have converted, sometimes in a single week, what was a silent waste into a scene of laborious industry.

To the north all these mountain ranges gradually sink into the immeasurable plains of the interior, through which wind the Murray — the Mississippi of Australia — and its thousand tributary streams. This great river is

supposed to be navigable as far as Albany, or 1900 miles from its mouth; its importance, as the great natural artery for the traffic of the interior of the continent, is only now beginning to be understood. It is rather more than twelve months since the first attempt was made on a large scale to ascertain its navigability. In September and October, 1853, Captain Cadell, accompanied by Sir Henry Young, the Lieutenant-Governor of South Australia, ascended the river in a steamer of 40-horse power, from near its mouth to 150 miles above Swan Hill, that is, 1450 miles in all. Sir H. Young details the results of this voyage in two interesting despatches to the Colonial Secretary, which will be found in the Appendix. At the highest point that he reached, the Murray was 200 yards wide and 3 fathoms deep. The Murrumbidgee river, a great tributary to the Murray, Sir H. Young believes to be navigable 700 miles from the junction. The navigation of the entrance to the Murray from the sea is beset with difficulties; but these are obviated by a railway seven miles in length, recently completed, connecting the river terminus on the Lake Alexandrina with Port Elliot in Encounter Bay. Captain Cadell's steamer brought down the first cargo of wool from the squatting stations on the river banks; and the Lieutenant-Governor is sanguine that the result of this successful voyage will be the establishment of the Murray as the great highway of inland communication to the three colonies, and especially to the Victoria Gold Diggings; and further, that, ere long, thriving agricultural settlements will spring up along the alluvial margin of the river.

At present these districts are stocked, though very in-

adequately, with sheep. The grass is burnt up during the summer heats; but when the pasturage is destroyed, the sheep feed and fatten on a shrub called the "salt bush," which, by a beneficent arrangement, is abundant in these torrid tracts, though unknown or very rare to the south. Large areas are covered with the "mallee scrub,"—a perplexed maze of dwarf forest of the *mallee*, with intervening patches of open country. In the summer the "mallee scrub" is wholly destitute of water, and woe betide the traveller who then loses himself in its labyrinths. It is said that the aborigines, in the extremity of thirst, extract water from the root of a plant which grows here.

The temperature of the valley of the Murray is far higher than that of the southern districts along the seaboard, and even exceeds that of the Indian peninsula; and it is more than probable that Great Britain will hereafter be supplied from these now solitary wastes with a large proportion of those tropical products for which she is now dependent on foreign lands, while her surplus population may here for many ages find ample room to spread, establish happy homes and well-filled barns, and actualise the beautiful Hebrew ideal of domestic and social bliss, every man "sitting under his own vine and under his own fig-tree."

CHAPTER III.

TOWNS AND TOWNSHIPS.

Approach to Melbourne —The Wharves — The City — Increase in value of land — Restaurants — Fires frequent since the Gold Epoch — Municipal loan — Water supply — Sandridge — The first Railway — Williamstown — Electric Telegraph — The Harbour — Geelong — Railway to Melbourne — Other towns — Inland townships.

AT the northern extremity or head of Port Phillip Bay, sheltered by a low rocky headland, lies Hobson's Bay, the harbour of the capital of Victoria. Here the river Yarra enters the sea, after winding for the last few miles of its course through a low, swampy delta. About eight or ten miles from the mouth, gently swelling hills rise out of the alluvial plain. On these slopes, on the right bank, stands the city of Melbourne, at the distance of hardly more than a mile from the sea in a direct line. Sailing up the river, the stranger is struck with the peculiar and exotic character of the "tea-tree scrub," or copse-like jungle, that borders its banks. Above the aboriginal scrub, however, appear the towers and public buildings of the European city, crowning the hill-tops and ascending their sides. At length the low, thick jungle ceases, and you land on the bustling wharf, piled up with merchandise, crowded with porters, clerks, dealers, and hangers-on, and lined with drays, whose owners are receiving their loads. Between the wharf and the town a large open

space is covered with imported timber and vast stacks of flooring-boards. The river itself, which may be here one-fourth the width of the Thames at London, is crowded with coasting craft and lighters, discharging the cargoes of the fleet of merchantmen which lies at anchor in Hobson's Bay. Higher up, the Yarra is spanned by a noble arch, connecting the city with the long, straggling suburb of Prahran, and with the pretty village of St. Kilda on the Bay, the favourite residence of the wealthier citizens. Near the bridge stood the squalid tents of "Canvass Town," now no more, which received the overflowing population of a city suddenly become too small for its inhabitants.

On landing, the stranger is struck with the broad macadamised roads, and the busy crowds and ceaseless tide of traffic that roll through them. So much bustle and activity is, indeed, rarely witnessed in the "old country," except in London itself. On the wharves are huge piles of timber, of bricks, compressed hay, bales, barrels, and cases of all sizes. About eighteen months ago, before the recent increase of wharf accommodation, and during the rainy season, valuable property was often thrown into, and sometimes irretrievably lost in, the deep mud which hemmed in the wooden platforms of the quays. It was Balaklava anticipated.

On entering the town we find broad streets, crossing each other at right angles, and bordered with well-filled shops and massive stone stores, piled up with miscellaneous merchandise. The buildings are constructed of brick stuccoed, or of the dark "bluestone" or basalt, quarried in abundance near the city. The public buildings are not

magnificent, but reflect no discredit on a city of seventeen years' growth. The churches and chapels are numerous. Several have been added since the sudden recent increase of the population, consequent on the gold discoveries. Previous to that period, numerous vacant plots broke the continuity of the buildings, even in the main streets. These, however, have now been generally filled with shops and stores, while several new streets and suburbs have spread off from the rectangle which formed the original site for the city.

The increase in the value of land and houses in the towns, and particularly in Melbourne, and the rents now paid, are scarcely credible. Land, with old buildings upon it, in Elizabeth Street, has been sold for 300*l.* per foot frontage. An ironmonger's business in Collins Street, with the premises and stock, sold for 35,000*l.* In the principal streets, 1000*l.* per annum is not an extraordinary rent for a house and shop: 1500*l.*, and even 2000*l.* a year and upwards, is sometimes paid. A shop and dwelling near the Post Office, in Bourke Street, is let for 2500*l.* per annum. Rents are always paid in advance, either for the week, month, or quarter,—a very salutary check on the recklessness of adventurers without capital.

The hotels are numerous; and a few of them are large and commodious. The chief is the "Criterion," which has lately been remodelled and gorgeously fitted up on the American model.

The discovery of gold in Victoria forms the great epoch in its history, to which all events are referred, as having happened "before" or "after the gold." The changes consequent on the sudden and immense acquisition of

population and wealth have affected not only the outward aspect of the capital, but also the social condition and habits of the people. One new feature in the city is the introduction of numerous handsome *restaurants*, so common all over the continent of Europe, though they have never succeeded in England. Many of these are kept by foreigners, — French, German, and American, — and they have almost superseded the old-fashioned "chop-house" and "coffee-room."

By the provisions of a Building Act, founded on that framed for London, the erection of wooden buildings i prohibited within the limits of the city; but a few old wooden houses, built in the first years of the colony, may still be seen in the main streets—the "antiquities" of Melbourne. It is worthy of remark that fires, which were very rare up to the gold era, have of late been both frequent and destructive; so that, had it not been for this salutary provision, the city might, like San Francisco, have been more than once reduced to ashes. A new suburb, called North Melbourne, consists chiefly of wooden houses; and here I have known one side of a street entirely consumed in the space of half an hour.

Melbourne is still wholly without sewers and gas. During the heavy storms the surface-water rushes down the central street like a river, which you must cross as you can, by wading or by a temporary bridge. Outside the town these torrents have scooped out deep channels and ravines, which embarrass the traffic, and can only be passed by bridges. These inconveniences will, however, soon cease to exist. A public company, long since formed, is about to supply the streets with gas, and the munici-

pality are commencing a grand series of works of sanitary and civic improvement, one of the chief of which will be a system of sewerage. To carry out these works efficiently, they have just effected a loan from certain London capitalists of 500,000*l.*

At the same time Government is engaged upon a magnificent scheme for supplying the city with water. An immense reservoir, several hundred acres in extent, is now being formed near the head of the river Plenty, about twenty miles from Melbourne, from whence water is to be conveyed to the city by iron pipes, which have just been shipped from England. The reservoir is created by damming up an open valley-basin. The contract for constructing the dam amounted to nearly 100,000*l.* As the supply of water will be on the amplest and grandest scale, we may hope to see a complete system of irrigation established for the suburbs of the capital, the effect of which would be magical; for what is now a dreary sandy desert would then be clothed with fresh verdure and flowers. Another benefit accruing from such a measure would be the suppression or mitigation of one of the chief plagues of the metropolis, namely, the whirling dust-clouds raised by the hot wind from the arid grassless suburbs, and blown through the streets and into every house and every room in the city.

Sandridge, about a mile and a half from Melbourne, is a thriving little town, on the shore of Hobson's Bay, where it approaches nearest to the capital. Sandridge sprang into existence with a rapidity unmatched even in Victoria. In 1852, nothing was to be seen here but an hotel, a jetty, and possibly two or three wooden houses, on a beach of

loose deep sand. In the following year you might have seen a busy street, with shops, stores, and refreshment rooms, flags flying, a crowded jetty, a throng of boats, and all the bustle and life of a seaport. Sandridge is the most convenient landing-place from the ships in the harbour; and hence its sudden growth and prosperity was but the necessary consequence of the rapid augmentation of the shipping. The quick and progressive rise in the value of property here is almost beyond belief. One illustration of this will be enough. In the year 1852, at a government land sale, a certain plot at Sandridge was knocked down at what was then deemed the extravagant price of 700*l.* As usual at these sales, a deposit of 10 per cent. was paid down, and the remainder of the purchase money was to be handed over to the Treasury within one month. The purchaser, however, thinking that he had been induced to bid more than the land was worth, determined to give up his purchase and sacrifice the amount already paid. He did so; and in October, 1853, the same lot was brought forward at another government land sale; but so greatly had the value of property at Sandridge advanced during this interval, that the very same person who had refused to complete his purchase for 700*l.* now bid for the same lot no less than 3400*l.* This sum was paid for one quarter of an acre, on a sandy beach.

Sandridge is connected with the capital by a railway, which was to be opened in October last (1854). The rails are run out into the sea on a long jetty; and here it is hoped the ships in the harbour may lie alongside and discharge their cargoes. This will be the first railway opened in Australia. Formerly the beach was too much

exposed to wind and wave to allow of vessels lying alongside the jetty; but now the multitude of ships at anchor in the bay forms a kind of breakwater which protects the shore.

Williamstown, on the opposite side of Hobson's Bay, and sheltered by Gellibrand's Point, is also a flourishing township. Here are government establishments of water-police and customs, and from hence the shipping in the harbour is supplied with fresh provisions. An electric telegraph is in operation between Williamstown and Melbourne, and is to be continued round Port Phillip Bay to the entrance from the open sea. Williamstown was founded at the same time as Melbourne, and received the royal name, while that of the then prime minister was given to the new city on the Yarra. Natural advantages were, however, almost all in favour of Melbourne,—Williamstown being situated on a rocky promontory, without wood, fresh water, or cultivated land around it, its proximity to the harbour being its sole advantage.

St. Kilda is a village on the coast, a mile beyond Sandridge; and a few miles further stands Brighton, another favourite resort of the richer citizens of Melbourne.

Between Sandridge and Williamstown, a magnificent fleet of several hundred merchantmen ride at anchor in the bay, comprising some of the largest, finest, and fastest ships in the world, and presenting a scene which can scarcely be matched elsewhere; certainly neither at London nor Liverpool, where the shipping is shut up within the walls of several separate docks, and where you have muddy stagnant water and a murky atmosphere, instead of the glancing crystal wave and bright blue sky of Port Phillip

Bay. Numerous boats and small steam-vessels flit about among the stately ships and great ocean steamers, while a white hulk, with "REFRACTORY SEAMEN" painted in large capitals on her side, is calculated to arrest the attention of newly arrived sailors who may be meditating an escape to the gold-fields.

A railway from Melbourne to Williamstown is now being constructed; this is an offset from a much grander scheme, namely, a line from the capital to the Mount Alexander gold-field, a distance of seventy or eighty miles. Whether, or when, the latter will be carried into execution is doubtful; those who have undertaken the work having neither the requisite capital nor enterprise. Government has, however, granted the land along the whole line, besides other privileges and guarantees. Such a grand arterial line would be of inestimable value to the country. It would immediately open up large tracts of cultivable land in the interior, which would supply the now meagre markets of Melbourne. It would obviate an immense deal of cruelty, and save the loss of many thousands of pounds now thrown away every winter in the shape of bullocks and horses: for thousands of these poor beasts are annually sacrificed in battling their way, urged by whip and goad, through the oozy morasses and Sloughs of Despond, which must be got through, somehow, by every team carrying stores to the mines during the rainy season.

Geelong, the second town in the colony, stands on the pleasant shores of the beautiful Corio Bay, forming the western extremity of Port Phillip Bay. In the rear of the town, about a mile from the sea-beach, the river Barwon, here deep and broad, rolls its waters towards the

sea, so that one end of the town faces the sea and the other the river. Beyond the Barwon rise the steep grassy slopes of the Barrabool Hills, admirably adapted for husbandry, and already to a great extent under tillage. From the summits of these hills the eye ranges over a superb panorama. Beneath you, looking east, spread the blue waters of Port Phillip Bay, with the noble sweep of the granitic hill called Station Peak on the left, in its outline and combination with the sea reminding the traveller of Vesuvius as it shuts in the Bay of Naples. At Point Henry, about six miles from Geelong, are seen a few large ships at anchor, being prevented from approaching closer to the town by a submarine bar, which here stretches across the entrance to the inner bay. A hazy outline of mountains can be descried beyond the bay, being those to the north and east of Melbourne. Looking south is seen the open ocean, separated from Port Phillip by a narrow neck of land. On the opposite, or land side, lies an open plain, through which the Barwon winds its way in a deep-sunk rocky channel. Far beyond, on the horizon, may be descried the isolated volcanic hills already noticed, which rise like islands out of the immense Western Plains.

As there is no safe or commodious harbour west of this point till we reach the adjacent colony of South Australia, Geelong may be considered the natural outlet of the whole western district of Victoria, embracing a larger extent of country than Melbourne itself. As there is good anchorage almost close in to the shore, it would have surpassed Melbourne in facilities for loading and discharging ships, had it not been for the existence of the submarine bar at Point Henry, which shuts out large vessels from

the inner harbour. The channel through this bar is now being deepened by a steam dredge, to admit of the passage of large ships; and the inhabitants of Geelong, who have long been working hard to get this work effected, are very sanguine as to the results upon the commerce of their town, which they delight to celebrate as the "commercial pivot" of Victoria.

Geelong is supposed to contain, including its straggling suburbs along the shore, a population of about 25,000. It has its municipal institutions, its daily paper, its courts of justice, gaol, and hospital, two churches, and numerous chapels. The streets are in part macadamised; those which are not so present in winter a dreadful slough of stiff mud, through which ponderous drays and long teams of jaded bullocks drag their heavy way. Such were all the streets in the younger days of the town. Following the example of the capital, the municipality of Geelong has just contracted a loan of 200,000*l.*, to aid in carrying out sanitary and other improvements.

A railway to connect Geelong with Melbourne is now in rapid progress, the capital having been almost or wholly subscribed. The distance is about 40 miles, and as the line traverses the length of the Melbourne Plains, there are great facilities for construction. The directors hope that it may be opened in 1855. Another line of railway has been planned to the Ballarat gold-field, about fifty miles north of Geelong; but the execution of this project is more doubtful. As the greater part of the capital for these lines is furnished, directly or indirectly, from Geelong, it may be presumed that the merchants and traders there are opulent and enterprising.

Besides the great landlocked bays of Port Phillip and Western Port, Victoria has no good harbours along her coast. Three small towns have, however, established themselves on the sea-board west of Port Phillip Bay, viz., Belfast, Warnambool, and Portland. These have shared the general impulse consequent on the gold discoveries. Their trade is chiefly carried on by coasting craft, though a few ships have sailed direct from England to Portland. Alberton is the chief town of the eastern province of Gipps Land.

Numerous inland *townships* are marked down on the government maps of the colony. These have sometimes no existence except on paper. Sometimes they possess the rudiments of a town, in the shape of a small inn, a blacksmith's forge, and perhaps a "Store," or general depository for all sorts of manufactured articles, groceries, &c. &c. Occasionally a straggling street of wooden buildings has grown up around the original nucleus. On the great line of road from Melbourne to the Mount Alexander gold-field, these townships occur at intervals of five or ten miles, and are of more consideration, generally containing one or more hotels and a few shops. Some of these will in a few years be thriving populous towns.

Dense masses of population are collected at the centres of all the great Gold-fields. As soon as the Government established townships at these places, and put up the land for sale, it was bought up with avidity; and now the earlier tents of the storekeepers and others not immediately engaged in mining are being rapidly superseded by wooden buildings, formed of planks and boards, or of rough logs split up into *slabs*.

CHAPTER IV.

POPULATION AND SOCIAL ASPECTS.

Composite character of population — English feeling dominant — Squatters — Melbourne crowd — Christmas of 1851-2 — Diggers and their brides — Crisis of the Gold Fever — Prospects of emigrants — "New chums" — Gold-brokers — Their frauds — Public amusements — The botanic garden — Literature — Franchise conceded to schoolmasters.

No country on earth can show a population composed of more heterogeneous elements than Victoria: — English, Scotch, Irish, Americans, French, Germans, Hindoos, Negroes, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, New Zealanders, Australian Aborigines,—and still our list is not complete. Fortunately for the public peace, all these coalesce and fraternise in the most amicable manner. All are subject to the same laws and enjoy the same privileges. No nationalities are wounded, and none are prominently displayed, unless it be on the occasion of certain anniversary dinners, when each of the three sections of the United Kingdom meet their compatriots, and make speeches in praise of their country and of themselves. Even the Irish Roman Catholic here forgets his antagonism to the "Saxon." The Americans, abandoning or restraining their own predilections and peculiar habits, become active traders or quiet and industrious mechanics, and, as such,

are universally liked and valued. The Chinese generally arrive in companies, habited in their own costume, and at once start off to the diggings, where they have their full share of success. The New Zealanders work quietly together in the same way. All individual national peculiarities appear to be overshadowed by the dominant English habits and English feelings. As a whole, the colonists are thoroughly English. In spite of almost perpetual and bitter complaints of the indifference and neglect of the mother country, of the misgovernment of Downing Street, and of local maladministration, still the great bulk of the people retain the warmest attachment to English institutions, and feel themselves, their hopes, and fears, and affections, bound up in the destiny of that land which they, in common talk, affectionately distinguish as "home." How true this is, was strikingly manifested a few months ago by the rapturous reception given to Sir Charles Hotham, the new Lieutenant-Governor. They erected triumphal arches, and conducted him, quite a stranger among them, with unexpected honours to the Government House. The same feeling of identity with England has just been manifested in another way. We learn by a late mail that the people of Melbourne have met to concert measures for raising 20,000*l.* in aid of the relatives of those who might fall in the war with Russia.

This strong instinctive attachment to the mother country must not be referred to historic associations, still less to abstract political feeling. The real bond is much stronger and more enduring. Early recollections of youth spent among the green valleys and beautiful haunts of England have twined themselves round the heart of the colonist, and

there remain till death. Recollections, too, of friends and relatives left behind are still fondly cherished; perhaps long after those friends have ceased to remember the self-made exile. England is still looked back to as a sort of visionary paradise of delights; and to be "going home" is reckoned as synonymous with all that is delectable. All this is as true of the felon transported for his crimes as of the educated and refined.

Previous to the gold era the population of Victoria consisted, First, of the squatters or "settlers," who had divided the entire country among themselves as "stations," or runs for pasturing sheep and cattle,—holding the same as lessees of the Crown. These, by birth, wealth, and education, formed the aristocracy of the land. A few were illiterate men, of low origin, but whose shrewdness and industry had, during the early vicissitudes of the colony, won for them opulence and large territory. By far the larger portion, however, were the younger members of English families of the middle and higher classes.

Secondly, there were the townspeople, including a few rich merchants who exported the wool and tallow produced by the settlers, forwarded supplies to their stations in the Bush, acted as their agents in town, often advanced them money, and carried on the general import trade of the colony.

Thirdly, there were the agriculturists; a class of small farmers, carrying on their operations in a slovenly and desultory way, and only supplying in part the requirements of the community,—the deficiency being made up by the neighbouring colonies.

The servants of the settlers, including shepherds, stock-

keepers, and others, formed a fourth class, known as *Bushmen.*

The squatters, being virtually the territorial lords, of course became the chief and dominant class. As they held their lands at rents almost nominal compared with the actual value, it is not strange that a perpetual warfare was maintained against them by the unprivileged classes or bulk of the community. However, supported by Acts of Parliament and Orders in Council, and by their own wealth and influence with the Government, they firmly held their own. Since the gold discoveries the squatters have in some degree been thrown into the shade by the sudden creation of a new and commanding interest; and as their numerical importance, compared with other classes, has also suffered diminution, the assault upon them, as a privileged minority, growing rich upon the property of the state, has been carried on with redoubled ardour.

The crowd that moves up and down the streets of Melbourne offers no marked difference to that seen in the streets of any large town in England. There are, indeed, none of the fashionable loungers of Regent Street here; neither are there such close-packed living masses as jam up Cheapside. Formerly, the broad "cabbage-tree" hats and bushy beards of the settlers "in from the Bush" might attract the notice of the newly arrived. A few years ago, parties of "blackfellows," wrapped in loose blankets or greasy opossum rugs, might now and then be seen moving along the main streets, accompanied perhaps by their squalid "loubras" (wives), dressed in old dirty faded gowns and cast-off battered bonnets. But these sights are passed. The free and easy shooting-coat and "cabbage-

tree" have been superseded by the more elaborate costume of European cities. As to the Aborigines, no one knows what has become of them. They melt away before the white man even when subjected to no ill-treatment, retire further and further from the central seats of the intruders, visit them less and less frequently, and at length disappear.

During the Christmas of 1851-2, the Melbourne streets presented some curious scenes and strange social phenomena. After the first successful campaign at the gold-fields, and under the flush and excitement of sudden and easily acquired wealth, the diggers returned to Melbourne to "knock down" their money and have a holiday, before they returned to Mount Alexander, where they were confident they could as readily find "plenty more." The streets, which had been almost deserted by the universal rush to the gold-fields, were now gayer than ever; and shopkeepers, who had shut up their shops for want of customers, now became busier than before. The "lucky diggers," chiefly old bushmen and sailors, having their pockets full of bank-notes, spent them with that reckless wastefulness which distinguishes the class, and which they cherish as a virtue. On arriving at Melbourne they would often place their gold, or its produce in cash, in the hands of the publican at whose house they put up, and then drink and revel for days in a sty of sensual delight, followed not unfrequently with the attendant "horrors" and *delirium tremens*. Some amused themselves by marrying. Often the courtship lasted only a few hours. The bride was then dressed out in all the gorgeousness of costly brocaded silks and rainbow-coloured

shawls and bonnets. They then hired a carriage, and made the man drive them furiously up and down the streets, to the admiration of some and the terror of more. The gold fever was at its height; the lower classes were intoxicated with the prospect of boundless wealth, and the vicious with visions of a perpetual paradise of "pleasure." In the meantime the police force had become almost broken up by the general rush of the men to the gold-fields; while the upper classes, finding themselves in the midst of a great social revolution, over which they had no control, could not look forward to the unknown future without some alarm.

This may be considered the crisis of the fever. From that period the diggers have never again broken out into such noisy recklessness. The streets have never again been first deserted, and then filled with drunken revelry and bacchanalian debauch. There has since been always a *double* stream of adventurers, passing from the city to the mines, and from the mines to the city. The traders have grown rich. The general commerce of the country has continually augmented. At the mines gold has been more difficult to get. The prizes in the lottery have been fewer, and the blanks more numerous. The diggers have grown more careful; the price of skilled labour has gone on increasing till it has become high enough to lure the regular artisans from the chances of the lottery to resume their proper avocations in the towns. Buildings, which for a year were almost suspended, now progressed rapidly in all directions. The educated classes resumed their due weight in the community; and, since the period named, the blue-shirted digger has never again been the same

important and conspicuous personage in the city of Melbourne.

One feature in the motley crowd of Melbourne may be noticed as characteristic of the progressive state of the colony. Readily distinguishable from all others, you may observe in the principal streets groups of men in rusty faded shooting-coats and worn-out caps, evidently strangers, and without any of that free-and-easy air which marks the Australian colonist. These are newly-arrived emigrants, fresh landed in Hobson's Bay. Feeling alone in a world of strangers, they become the more cordial towards each other; and they may be seen clustering round the Shakspeare Hotel, in Elizabeth Street, as a sort of rendezvous, warmly greeting each other, and mutually inquiring after the adventures and results of the first days' ramble in the capital of the Promised Land.

And here a few words may properly be said relative to the prospects of emigrants and the general inducements to emigrate which Victoria and Australia have to offer. These differ altogether according to the station, business, and pursuits of the emigrant. The industrious mechanic, the sturdy labourer, — every one who has a strong arm or a skilled right-hand, cannot fail to better his condition immensely by transporting himself to these shores. No sooner has he landed than he finds abundance of work, and employers ready to appreciate and reward industry and handicraft skill. Nor is there any fear that such will not continue to be the case for many years to come: for while in England we enter upon the labours of eight centuries of labour and thought, in Australia we have everything to begin for ourselves,—

roads, bridges, streets, public buildings, docks, railways. A large number of important public works are being just commenced, which cannot be completed for years to come; and before these are finished, the requirements of the ever enlarging community will call for others. Besides, opulence will here, as elsewhere, delight in the creation of sumptuous residences, gardens, and all the other appurtenances of modern life. As the colony, before its sudden start to extraordinary prosperity, was always calling for a larger supply of labour, there is no fear of any glut *now*, under such very different circumstances, when the work to be done is multiplied twenty-fold.

But among the mixed crowd of emigrants, there are others whose prospects on landing are far less hopeful. There are pale-faced clerks from London and Liverpool, whose only implement is the pen: there are sons of poor gentlemen in England, delicately brought up, and so very "well educated" that they know nothing which can be turned to practical account, either in their native land or in the new country. These exhibit all that helplessness and poverty of resource which the old colonist associates with the "new chum," a term by which all new comers are half-contemptuously designated.* These are they who

* The feelings with which a certain class of the "old colonists" regard new comers is ridiculously exhibited in the following little scene before the hustings at Melbourne:—

"Mr. Cocker, after some further interruption, was about proceeding with his remarks, when a man, on the steps leading to the hustings, caused additional confusion by his vociferations. He wanted to know how long Mr. Cocker had known Mr. Guthridge. He was only a 'new chum,' and they would not hear him; as for himself, he had been here 22 years, and knew all the candidates. The Mayor again

write those lugubrious letters, abusive of everything colonial, which sometimes appear in the English papers. Indeed, their position on landing, without friends or money, without strength in their arms or skill in their hands, is sufficiently forlorn and pitiable. A large proportion at once start off for the diggings, and, finding themselves quite unfit for such work, after a short campaign, return to Melbourne, disheartened and disgusted. But many have neither the requisite funds, nor strength, nor heart to try the digger's life, and determine to "get something" at Melbourne. They look over their bundle of introductions, perhaps find some addressed to leading merchants of the city, and, with a beating heart, present them. These letters probably lead to nothing, for the rich man's own affairs occupy all his time; and, besides, he is pestered with similar letters every week from almost-forgotten acquaintances in the old country. The "new chum," mortified with his reception, but goaded on by the necessity of supplying his daily wants, now casts about in quest of employment, but can discover no vacancy which he is qualified to fill. Something, however, must be done; and when he discovers that half the people of the place are engaged in occupations for which they were never intended in England, he is encouraged to follow their example. Some take to carpentering, and, after two or three days' apprenticeship, advertise themselves in the papers as

interposed, and threatened to send the noisy individual to the lock-up; and this only produced the rejoinder of, 'John Thomas, just listen to me for a moment: look at him' (alluding to Mr. Cocker); 'he is quite green; he has only been here eighteen months; he has'nt got the lime-juice off on him.' (Loud laughter.)"

"rough carpenters." Others try painting or paper-hanging. The most favourite course with those who can command a little capital is to turn carters. They purchase a horse and dray, and carry goods from the wharves to warehouses and elsewhere. There is a freedom, independence, and variety about this kind of life which renders it often much more consonant to the buoyancy of youth than the confinement and drudgery of the counting-house. Among the throng of drays and draymen at the wharf may be seen, dressed in rough blue serge shirt and wide-awake hat, with whip in hand, more than one youth who was once, and but a few months ago, a cherished member of a refined English circle, and whose hands, now rough and horny, seemed destined for other work than that of moving heavy bales and cases. The life, however, is healthy, profitable, and apparently not disagreeable to those engaged in it.

When all these resources fail, there is still one refuge for the destitute—the roads. A man can always obtain work here, and his earnings will vary from eight to twenty shillings a day. Even this employment is not found so distasteful as might be thought. What is counted menial and humiliating in England ceases to be so in a land where many of better condition are engaged in it; and it is not more degrading to use the pick and shovel on the road than in the gold-digger's "*hole.*" I have seen little coteries of friends, evidently men of education, working together breaking stones, while a rough-bearded "lucky digger" has galloped gaily by, well mounted, over the roads which the others were forming. After a few months' work, however, the *new chum* has

acquired some little stock of cash, increased physical strength, and some of that "colonial experience" of which he heard so much on first landing, and the want of which so often disqualified him for employment. Thus provided, he leaves the roads, finds some other occupation more congenial to his habits, becomes *dovetailed* into the community, and shares the advantages of the general progress of the colony.

Any account of the people of Melbourne would be incomplete without some notice of a class which has been called into existence by the gold discoveries,—I mean the gold-brokers. In the earlier days of gold-finding their calling was a very lucrative one; so lucrative, that a host of competitors sprang up, and profits soon became in consequence much reduced. The gold-broker carries on his trade in a small shop in one of the chief streets. On entering, you see on the counter three or four pairs of gold scales of different sizes; also a large metallic tray, on which he spreads the gold while blowing off the foreign matter and extracting minute particles of iron with the magnet. There is also a hammer and a small iron block, on which pieces of quartz containing gold are pulverised in order to liberate the metal. A loaded revolver is within reach behind him.

The digger, having obtained his little leather bag of gold, duly sealed and labelled, from the Government Escort Office, takes it to the broker,—first asks the price of gold for the day, produces his bag, and then watches the operation of cleaning, and blowing, and weighing. He finally receives a cheque for the amount.

Many of these brokers are Jews, and their shops are dis-

tinguished by large bowls of gold-dust and tempting nuggets exposed in the windows. Some of these of inferior note have no very high reputation. The facilities for fraudulent practices are great, with little chance of detection,—especially when dealing with obtuse and illiterate men. The weights may be too heavy, or one arm of the beam a trifle longer than the other; or, if both weights and balance are correct, fraud may yet be effected by resorting to some sleight-of-hand trickery. That such practices are not unfrequent is generally believed; and at least one delinquent has been convicted, and is now expiating his crimes by imprisonment with hard labour.

In other traffic it is the business of the seller to attract to him the buyer; but with gold the case is reversed, and the buyer has to allure to him the seller. Thus in the early days of the gold discoveries it became common to see such notices as these stuck up in shops in Melbourne: —"5000 ounces of gold wanted;" "10,000 ounces wanted immediately,—highest price given." When there was a difference of 25 per cent. between the London and Melbourne prices, speculators were anxious to obtain and ship to London as much as their funds would allow; but now the banks have entered the market as purchasers, and their competition has so raised the price that the purchaser of gold at Melbourne, for exportation, will often be a loser by his venture.

Almost all the wealthier citizens have their homes in the suburban villages: some at St. Kilda, on the seashore, two or three miles from Melbourne; some on the wooded slopes of the river Yarra; some on one of the smaller tributary streams, whose steep alluvial banks form

excellent sites for gardens. At about ten every morning, standing on the bridge, you may see them trooping into the town on sleek horses and in well-appointed dog-carts.

If the people of Melbourne are eager in pursuit of gain, yet they do not make themselves slaves to the pursuit. While active and energetic, they know nothing of that all-absorbing devotedness with which professional men in London give themselves up to their own vocation. A pale haggard face is hardly ever seen. The easy air and expression of the man very well-to-do in the world is much more characteristic of the Melbourne citizen.

When first the gold "broke out" (to use the diggers' phrase), the general excitement of all ranks, coupled with the domestic embarrassments from want of servants, almost put an end to private convivial meetings. On the other hand, public dinners and public balls have become much more frequent and sumptuous. These are sometimes attended by many hundreds, and two or three guineas is no uncommon price for a ticket.

Public amusements partake of the anomalous character of the community. They are almost wholly in the hands of, and patronised by, the lower and working classes. This applies to the theatre, to an equestrian circus in an immense tent, and to numerous cheap concerts. The cause of this is readily explained. Melbourne has always a large floating population of unlettered men, with plenty of money, low vicious tastes, and wholly debarred from the attractions of domestic comfort,—their home being a miserable, overcrowded, and dirty boarding-house. Such persons naturally resort in numbers to all places of public amusement; and others, of more refined habits and nature,

on finding that they are subjected to close proximity with coarse brutality and disgusting scenes and sights, of course keep away. There is, however, a weekly concert, attended by a smaller and selecter audience, where the performances are very creditable, and the exertions of a Mrs. Testar, the *prima donna* of Melbourne, are duly appreciated and loudly applauded.

The Botanic Garden, on a beautiful bend of the Yarra, is a favourite resort of the citizens; and here annual horticultural shows are held. Another garden on the Yarra, formed on the model of the Cremorne in London, was opened for a time, but it quickly degenerated to a mere garden of Sunday debauchery; whereupon the authorities interfered, and the garden was closed.

Literature, science, and art, can number but few votaries among the people of Melbourne. Indeed, the universal scramble for gold is of too exciting a kind to allow of much of that thoughtful leisure which seems requisite for such pursuits. There is a Mechanics' Institution, chiefly supported by the upper classes, and a weekly lecture is delivered here; but, except as a reading-room, the Institute seems to have little life or vigour in it. Among the many indirect benefits, however, that have accrued to the colony from the gold discoveries, is the arrival, amongst the mixed multitude, of a few men of no inconsiderable scientific and literary attainments; and their presence and influence will doubtless soon tell upon the mass of the community.

If literature and science are not sedulously cultivated, their importance is at least appreciated in the abstract. At the beginning of 1854, I witnessed a curious manifestation

of this feeling in the Legislative Council of the colony. That body was then arranging the details of the act which was to call into existence the new Colonial Parliament. On the day alluded to, the clauses relating to the constitution of the Upper House were under discussion; and by one of those clauses it was then enacted that the privilege of voting for members—which for this Upper House was much restricted—should be conceded to all authorised *schoolmasters*. This was a singular homage to *intellect* by a people supposed to be absorbed in the greed for gold.

CHAPTER V.

THE DIGGINGS AND DIGGERS.

The Gold Country described — Chief Gold-Fields — Discovery of new Diggings — Magical rise of a mining town — "Sly grog-shops" — Capture of bushrangers at Mac Ivor — Digging party on a journey — Their night camp in the forest — Arrival at Bendigo — "New Chums" journeying on foot — Scenes at Bendigo — The Golden Point — Street of stores — Government Camps — Contrasts — Grand scale of Gold Deposits — The White Hills — Nomenclature at the Mines — The mining population — Mode of life — The Digger's Lay — Scenes at the mines — Sunday — Mode of working — The Cradle and "Long-Tom."

In this chapter I wish to give the reader some idea of the habits, manner of life, and labours of that singular nomadic class which has sprung up during the last three years, and spread itself over very large areas in the interior of Australia, — sometimes concentrated in dense masses, and sometimes scattered in straggling groups over sequestered valleys. I shall first attempt to describe the kind of country in which their operations are carried on.

Imagine extensive districts of hill and dale, — the hills rocky, sterile, abounding with steep slopes, and entirely

covered with a dense, monotonous forest; the valleys, wide as they descend into the lowlands, but contracting to rocky gullies as they wind up into the heart of the mountains. Swelling, rounded hills sometimes flank one side of the valley, in advance of the rocky acclivities of the higher ranges behind; and not unfrequently these lower hills are covered or crested with quartz-gravel, glistening white like chalk. The forest clothes the hills down to the open grassy flats of meadow-land which form the bottoms; and through these flats winds the *creek* or stream, in a sunken channel, now expanding into a broad pool or "water-hole," and now contracting into a mere brook. Here and there rocky headlands or spurs advance from the flanking hills into the flats, force the creek to sweep off towards the opposite hills, and perhaps cross its channel as rocky bars. If the valley should prove highly auriferous, the rich deposits will generally be found, first, along the rocky bed of the creek, especially where crossed by a bar; secondly, on the sides and summits of the swelling hills flanking the valley; thirdly, in the gullies which branch off from the main valley; fourthly, on the alluvial flats,—not diffused over their entire area, but following a definite line, or rather forming a band which winds through the flat. In this case, the direction or course of the gold-bearing band has no relation to that of the creek, and can only be determined by opening the ground. It appears, in fact, to be nothing more than the orginal channel of the valley, formed by the meeting of its opposite rocky slopes, before the beds of clay and gravel which now fill the bottom had been deposited. (See *fig.* 1.)

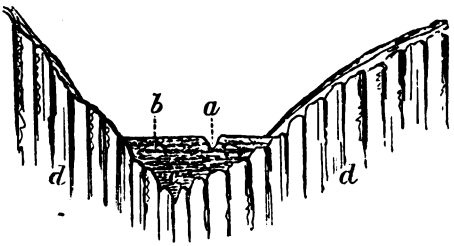


Fig. 1. Section of an Auriferous Gully.

a. Present creek.
b. Stratified drift; —clays, gravels, &c.
c. Gold-bearing deposit.
d. Vertical slates.

The general character of the auriferous country is so distinctly marked, that the eye of the most unobservant soon becomes able to recognise it. The rocks are more or less slaty; they are almost or quite vertical; and their direction or strike is always nearly due north and south. Indeed, so uniformly is this the case, that, if lost in a forest you might make your way out simply by noting the direction of the beds of rock.

There are vast tracts to which this description is applicable; but the spots yielding gold in abundance are, of course, comparatively few. Of those known, the richest were the first discovered, viz., the valleys of Forest Creek and Fryer's Creek, near Mount Alexander; the Bendigo district; and Ballarat. (See General Map, p. 8.) These still form the great centres of the mining population.* The most important of the gold-fields since discovered are,

* Forest Creek and Fryer's Creek are distant 70 miles N.N.W. from Melbourne. Bendigo is 30 miles north from Forest Creek; and Ballarat is 50 miles N.N.W. from Geelong.

the OVENS RIVER, about 150 miles from Melbourne, on the road to Sydney, — a favourite resort during successive summers, and scarcely second to any other gold district in extent and population; the MAC IVOR diggings, about 42 miles N.E. from Forest Creek and 38 from Bendigo; CRESWICK CREEK, north of Ballarat; MOUNT KORONG, and the AVOCA RIVER, west of Bendigo, and verging on the plains of the Murray. The last discovered, and one of the most important at the present moment, is the valley of the Avoca. These various gold-fields range over an area of about 24,000 square miles, being 240 miles in length from east to west, and 100 miles in breadth. Of this area large portions are, indeed, non-auriferous; and of the remainder, the greater part yields gold to such a limited extent that it could not be profitably extracted. Still, as a whole, it forms the richest gold-bearing region in the world, — having produced the largest average yield to a given number of miners, and the largest *nuggets*, or lumps of gold; while the gold produced is unequalled in purity, sometimes yielding 98 or 99 per cent. of pure metal.

Even on the spot it is often very difficult to learn when, by whom, and in what manner, a new gold district is first discovered. When the yield of an old working begins to fail, the diggers throw out small "prospecting" parties of twos and threes, to explore promising localities. These *prospectors* may occasionally make important discoveries; but far more frequently they are the result of chance, or of the desultory efforts of shepherds and other servants of the settlers resident in the particular locality. It sometimes happens that a digging party, travelling from one district to another, camp for a night in a valley which they may

think looks very promising. Being delayed here, perhaps, by the loss of their horse, or some other accident, they sink a pit or "hole" in a "likely" spot. The result may prove not favourable enough to induce them to remain, and they proceed on their way. Other parties are subsequently struck with the same appearance, observe also the pit, and sink another, and another. At length some one strikes a rich deposit. If so, it cannot long remain a secret. A few dozens or scores are shortly at work on the adjacent ground; and if these, too, are successful, the news spreads like wild-fire, and within a week all the roads and tracks leading to the spot are covered with diggers and their carts, on the way to the new Dorado — the *newest* being always by report the *best* and richest. In a few days the hills around the new working are dotted over with white tents, the forest around them quickly disappears, being felled for fire-wood. Government, on hearing of the discovery, sends down a Commissioner with a body of horse and foot police. These establish a camp on some central elevated position, and an irregular wide street of tents springs up like magic in the valley below. There are stores, large and small; butchers' shops; doctors' little tents; and innumerable refreshment booths, where, under the guise of selling lemonade and home-made beer, an extensive illicit trade is carried on in vile adulterated and often poisonous spirits. The blacksmith is always one of the first on the ground, and presently extemporises a forge out of a few loose stones or turf-sods. Flags are flying from the stores and shops, and give gaiety to the scene. The union-jack floats proudly above the Government camp on the hill, and military sentinels are on duty before the gold-tent.

As the diggers reach the spot they pitch their tents on the lower slopes of the hills or in the green flats. At night their watch-fires gleam far and wide, and from a neighbouring height the place has the appearance of a large town illuminated. A new gold-field is the favourite resort of horse-stealers, thieves, and miscreants of all kinds, who, lost in the crowd and confusion, here find ample opportunities for carrying on their nefarious practices. Their common haunts are the "sly grog-shops," which spring up like weeds on all sides. Here they rendezvous, and concoct those deeds of darkness which have given the colony such an unenviable fame. These grog-shops are traps for the unwary, dens of iniquity, where the drugged draught is administered; and the victim, thus rendered insensible and helpless, is stripped of every article of value. Not a night passes without some act of depredation. Horses are stolen, and ridden off to Melbourne, Geelong, or to the nearest gold-field, and sold by auction. The roads leading to the new diggings become infested with bushrangers; stories of being "stuck up" (or robbed) are more and more frequent; till at length a cartload of ruffians, heavily handcuffed, is seen moving towards the Government camp, well guarded by mounted troopers, and followed perhaps soon after by another guarded cart, containing two or three gaily dressed females. These are the bushrangers and their women, who have been hunted down and just captured by the troopers. And now for a time the roads are safe.*

* Such was the state of things as witnessed by myself at the Mac Ivor diggings about eighteen months ago. But changes are so rapid

No life can be more independent and free than that of the Australian digger; no travelling more agreeable than

in the colony, that possibly matters may now be much mended. (Jan. 1855.)

I subjoin the following characteristic extract from the correspondence of a colonial journal, as giving a lively sketch of a scene at Mac Ivor. The date is Jan. 14. 1854.

The reader will be surprised at the distinction accorded to the Duke of Newcastle, as Patron of Australian Bushrangers; but his Grace, as Colonial Secretary, refused her Majesty's assent to a Colonial Bill, intended to prevent the landing of conditionally-pardoned felons on the shores of Victoria, and hence the allusion.

"Five Newcastle pets, ready primed, loaded, and mounted, all caught here this week in a heap. Huzzah! What say ye, Messrs. Stawell and Foster; will ye come up soon to defend your precious pets? You won't surely leave your poor devils alone and undefended? But to the story.

"Our present Acting Chief Commissioner Willoughby, accompanied by Cadet-Lieutenant Symmonds, of thief-catching notoriety, and one of the smartest young officers in the force, and also accompanied by a troop of mounted police, and in the rear a troop of foot police, went out to-day on a license tour through the diggings. The officers, with their troops, had arrived at Argyle Gully, when they espied two mounted men sloping off very suspiciously into the bush off the road. Our two officers gave chase to them at once, and in coming close up espied in the distance three more mounted men, pushing away out of sight too. Circumstances became now too apparent as to what these mounted men were; and, after a smart run for it, they were all gallantly headed up by young Symmonds, and speedily captured, dismounted, and handcuffed. Every one of them was found well armed, loaded, and capped, and their countenances showed at once who was their uncle—the Duke of Newcastle, bless him! One of them threatened to do for young Symmonds on the first opportunity; but I hope the magistrates will employ him and the lot, for some years to come, for the benefit of their country and their own good morals. A general shout seemed to pervade the

summer travelling in the Bush; carrying about with you in your cart your tent, your larder, and all your domestic appointments. In choosing a halting-place for the night you have the w'ole country open to you, — no walls or hedges to shut you in to a dusty turnpike road. You drink from the clear running creek; the soft green turf is your carpet; your tent your bedroom. Your horse, duly *hobbled,* enjoys the fresh pasturage around. The nearest fallen tree supplies you with fuel for your evening fire. It is this free out-of-door life, and the buoyancy of spirit that goes with it, this exemption from all restraint, which often allures men back to the diggings after some months' artificial life in the towns.

A digging party consists of three or four partners or *mates;* sometimes of a single family; perhaps of a father, his son and wife. The party being formed, the first thing is to purchase a strong light cart and a staunch horse, such as no depth of mud, no swamp, and no steep will daunt. On the appointed day the party assemble; the cart is carefully packed,—the heavy tools and stores at the bottom, the gold washing-tubs and tent above, and the blankets and clothes of the party at the top. If there are (as is not uncommon) any women in the party, they are seated high above all, forming the apex of the pyramid. The frying-pan is stuck on to one side, and the camp-kettles hang

diggings as they were marched down handcuffed together through the diggings to the camp,—Lieutenant Symmonds following behind with a loaded Colt's revolver. These are the class of men that put us to so much loss and anxiety, in stealing our horses and sticking us up."

jingling underneath. A white tarpaulin being spread over the load, the women mount to their place, and the cart is put in motion. The diggers, in rough serge shirts, walk at the side. They have belts with large pointed knives stuck in them; and some carry guns. One goes to the horse's head and carefully guides him through the mud-holes, water-courses, and little gullies, which cut up the outskirts of the town. As the sun sinks in the west they seek for a good camping ground in the neighbourhood of wood and water; and of grass, unless the whole country should be burnt up by the sun or the bush fires. A spot having been selected, the party halt. The horse is taken out and carefully tended. The tent is pitched; and if the clouds threaten rain, a trench is dug round the canvass. Some go for water, others collect sticks. Presently a fire is crackling and blazing, the camp-kettle is put on, the evening meal of mutton, bread, and tea is quickly ready and despatched; after which the diggers gather round the cheerful blazing logs, and pass the evening smoking and chatting, discuss their plans and prospects, relate former adventures and achievements; and if an old bushman should be in the party, you may be sure he will regale them with thrilling tales of hairbreadth escapes, attacks by bush-rangers, and encounters with the blacks. At an early hour they retire to the tent, or creep under the shelter of the tarpaulin spread over the cart, and there sleep soundly on their rude matrasses. The fire burns dimmer and dimmer, and presently no sound disturbs the deep hush of silence that reigns throughout the forest. At break of day all are again on the move. The dying embers of last night's fire are raked together,—the morning meal prepared,—the

horse brought in, unhobbled and fed,—the cart packed up, and the party proceed. We will not follow them through all the ups and downs, adventures and misadventures, of a journey to the diggings, but will suppose them arrived at length at their destination. Here they carefully select a spot for their home. The only limit set upon their choice is preoccupation by others. The great point is to obtain a site near to wood and water. The latter may generally be found at the bottom of old workings in the valley bottoms. As regards wood, all the hill-sides near the older workings have been totally cleared by the earlier diggers; so that the new party, to obtain fuel in abundance, must go back upon the higher slopes, or retire into the lateral gullies. A site having been selected, the tent is pitched, the cart drawn up close alongside; the horse is secured to the cart, for the hills are too bare to be worth feeding on; and besides, if he were allowed to roam, he would no doubt be stolen. Two of the party now sally out, each with a broad American axe, and attack the nearest tree, making a deep cutting on either side, till the stately trunk falls with an echoing crash, all its green foliage fresh upon it. The boughs are lopped off and dragged to the little homestead; and presently a cheerful fire is blazing, and the new comers begin to feel *at home*. They next visit the several *gullies* and *flats;* learn what new "rushes" have taken place; hear that one flat has been abandoned because the water filled the "holes" faster than the men could pump it out; that another gully has been deserted because the water-holes were dried up and the "washing-stuff" would n't pay to cart to the nearest creek; that in such a flat the dig-

gers were "shepherding"* their *holes* till the dry weather had set in; that in another they had just struck the "juggler"†; that in Eagle-Hawk Gully parties were "paddocking"‡ the old workings; that there had been a great "rush" to Poverty Gully, but that nineteen holes in twenty had proved "shishars."§

After thus collecting all the floating mining news of the place, they eventually choose their ground, mark out a plot ten or sixteen feet square, and set to work with pick and shovel,—always the American shovel, which has quite supplanted the English.

We have supposed that our digging party were provided with horse and cart; but of course a large proportion are too poor for this. Some put their "swags" upon a bullock-dray or cart, but others cannot afford, or will not pay, the required 15 or 20 shillings; and you may pass on the road troops of unhappy "new chums," limping along under heavy loads, jaded and footsore, yet compelled to keep up with their party, or be left behind friendless, lonely, and perhaps penniless. The sufferings of many who reached the colony with the first great wave of immigration can scarcely be conceived by the English reader. I mean those especially who, landing at Melbourne during the rainy months, proceeded at once to the mines. With-

* Watching. — Some of the many new terms in the diggers' vocabulary clearly indicate whence and by whom they were brought into use. Of others it is impossible to give any account.

† The jugular vein.

‡ That is, marking out and working large areas of ground already once wrought.

§ Blanks or failures.

out any of the resources or powers of endurance of the old bushmen, they started off quite ignorant of what they were to encounter on the road. Borne down by their heavy knapsacks or swags, they toiled during the day through the deep, thick, sticky mud and black bog called roads,—"crawling like flies across a plate of treacle,"—and at night they lay down upon the reeking earth without fire, and sometimes without shelter: while perhaps a party of "old hands" might be camped close at hand, lying dry and snug in spite of the pelting rain and the mud, and with a large blazing fire in front, which they had succeeded in kindling, though every twig and leaf were saturated with the rains. No one can say how many perished under these hardships, or how many were cut off by the dysentery that often followed.

In order to give the reader a more lively impression of the diggings and the diggers, I will take him to Bendigo, that great Metropolis of the Mines, and attempt to photograph some of the singular sights to be seen there. We will suppose the season to be spring, about October, and the time to be within two or three hours of sunset. We have passed the rolling granite country around Mount Alexander, and are now arrived at the base of a barrier of steep rocky ranges, which here rise directly across the road, and distinctly mark the commencement of the gold country. The hills are not lofty, but they rise with fine sweeping outlines from the plain into bold isolated masses against the sky; and, like all the gold-bearing country, they are covered with forest to their very summits. The road, by a steep ascent, reaches a gap in the hills, commanding a noble view to the south; Mount Alexander,

the great granite nucleus of the central gold-fields, rising detached out of undulating lowlands; and shadowy plains and misty mountain ranges far beyond. In the opposite direction you look over the dark forested ridges and deep intervening hollows of the rich gold-field of Bendigo. The gap in the hills which we have now reached is but a mere saddle, and we immediately descend by a steep narrow gully, which, gradually widening, leads us to the head of a fair and fertile valley, with wooded slopes, green gullies branching off right and left, and a wide flat alluvial bottom, through which winds a creek, here and there expanding so as to form a chain of water-holes. This is the Bendigo Valley. After following it for a mile or two, we see two or three tents on the margin of the creek, —the first sign of an approach to this great hive of industry. As we advance, the tents, still scattered, become more frequent, and at length the slopes and flats are studded with them; and large patches of upturned yellowish earth in the midst of the green *flat*, show that we have reached the skirts of the diggings. On the banks of the creek men are standing over tubs of auriferous earth or "washing-stuff," which they work about with a spade, occasionally tilting out the muddy water, and baling in fresh from the creek. Presently the tents become as thick as houses in a town, and the road passes between rows of large stores and shops and auction-rooms; and beyond and around are seen, instead of green flats and grassy gullies, vast level areas covered with gravel, clay, and sand, and burrowed with innumerable gold-diggers' "holes." The creek here approaches close to the road, and on its opposite bank you observe a sort of reef or bar

of red rock; all the earth has been removed from the protruding rocks, and every chink and crevice has been carefully cleared out. This is the "Golden Point;" and it is worthy of a passing notice, for it was here, towards the close of 1851, that gold was first found at Bendigo. As the spot was conspicuous, and the precious metal lay near the surface and in the chinks in the rock, it was not likely long to elude research, when the cry of gold was abroad in the land, and every shepherd and stock-keeper was intent upon discovering it. This Golden Bar was like those architectural capitals at Pompeii, which, peering above the soil under which the city lay sepulchred, hinted at the treasures which might be brought to light by digging around and beneath. Had this gold-bearing bar not existed there, or had it been covered up by the alluvium of the plain, the name of Bendigo might have been still unknown, and the millions of ounces of gold which it has yielded, and which now form no insignificant part of our currency, might have remained buried deep in those recesses where it had quietly reposed for ages, awaiting the predestined period when Australia was to receive a swarm from the old Anglo-Saxon hive.

Leaving the "Golden Point," the road has now the creek on one side and a wide tract of deserted workings on the other, stretching away out of sight down the valley. After another mile it again becomes a street of tents, stores, and shops, behind which chaotic heaps of gravel and clay still show that the entire valley has been turned up by the diggers. We have now reached the centre of this great mining district. On a lofty terrace on the left, faced with a steep green escarpment, is seen

the Government Camp and its tall flag-staff and union-jack, sentinels on duty, ranges of extensive stabling, and a massive log-hut, serving as a lock-up. At the foot of this terraced hill is the burying-ground, and, near it, the Bendigo hospital. Great wooden stores, auction-rooms, and other buildings show that this spot has long been the centre of a large mining population. A stream of busy life passes up and down the streets of Sandhurst (for the place is now erected into a Government township). There are parties of newly arrived diggers with their high-piled carts; travellers half enveloped in high boots on travel-soiled horses; carts of earth going to the creek to have the gold washed out; huge drays of merchandise, with long teams of jaded bullocks, just in from a three or four weeks' journey from Melbourne; and diggers, with pick and shovel on shoulder, trudging homeward from the day's work. Contrasted with mud-soiled men and jaded beasts, there is the lordly Gold-commissioner, with gold-laced cap, mounted on his fine sleek steed, and with his two attendant troopers in the rear.

For the next two or three miles the road passes through an almost continuous street of stores and shops, while the diggers' tents are perched on the slopes of the hills or in the lateral gullies. The valley bottom is still covered with gravel, and burrowed by countless pits and tunnels, through which the creek has carved out a channel.

But a ride up the principal valley gives a very inadequate idea of the magnificent scale of the golden deposits of Bendigo, and of the prodigious amount of human labour spent in developing them,— an amount quadrupled by the desultory nature of operations carried on by small in-

dependent parties of miners. If you ascend any commanding eminence, you discover that not only has the entire bottom or floor of the main valley been turned up, but that every lateral gully running up into the ranges right and left has also been wrought, and sends down its tributary yellow stream to meet the great river of diggings that fills the breadth of the main valley. From hence, too, you will observe, looking down the valley and on the right of the creek, six or seven rounded hills, with rugged outlines, glistening white against the dark ranges behind. These are the "White Hills," well known to every Australian digger. In outward aspect and mineral character they are unique, and peculiar to Bendigo. As usual, the richest happened to be attacked the first. While the nature of their contents was still a mystery, a party of diggers toiled patiently for several weeks in sinking a shaft through 60 or 70 feet, chiefly of conglomerated drift of the most obstinate hardness. They were rewarded at length by discovering a rich deposit of the precious metal lying on the top of a bed of white "pipeclay," of unknown depth; through which they tunnelled, bringing down the gold in profusion from the roof of their working. While sinking the shaft, their proceedings had been carefully watched by many anxious to profit by the result; and no sooner was this known than the adjoining ground was marked off, shafts were sunk, windlasses erected, and the summit of the hill soon became a busy hive of industry, while immense mounds of white earth rose from its crest and sides.

But the main valley is only a part of this great goldfield. On the *left* or north of the creek, there is a

parallel series of seven large tributary gullies, some wrought two or three miles in extent. On the *right* or south of the principal valley, two lateral gullies, debouching on the main stream, and running up into the ranges till they meet, present a continuous chain of workings four miles long. On the whole, the Bendigo district must include near a hundred gullies and flats, extending over an area ten miles long and five broad, and is doubtless without a rival in the world for extent and richness of yield.

Every working in each gold-field has it name, and these are often very odd and highly characteristic. Some are derived from the first workers there, as "American," "Californian," "Canadian," and "New Chum's Gully;" some from incidents occurring at or near them,—thus we have Murdering Flat, Chok'em Flat, Dead Man's Gully, White Horse Gully; and many from the caprice of those who first wrought there, as Peg-Leg Gully, Poverty Gully, Grumble-Gut Gully. Eagle-Hawk Gully, one of the most famous, was so called from a digger having by chance driven his pick into a nugget, which, when taken out, was found to have thus acquired the shape of an eagle-hawk's head. A rich gully at Ballarat got the classical name of EUREKA; and this (which many supposed to be a native Australian word) became at last quite popular, and was assumed by coffee-shops, boarding-houses, &c.

The mining population is ever fluctuating, its ranks being constantly replenished by new comers; while, on the other hand, numbers are constantly quitting them for the ordinary avocations of agriculture and town life. In the first feverish excitement, all classes rushed to Ballarat

and Mount Alexander. Shepherds and stock-keepers, mechanics, tradesmen, and professional men,—some for gain, and some from force of example. I have heard of military officers, members of council, and clergymen, all working together. Some of the most fortunate of the diggers were runaway sailors. Clever mechanics and veteran bushmen also carried off many of the best prizes. The gentlemen-diggers were, of course, the least successful, as being the least fit for the work; and they soon returned to their proper callings, and discovered that, after all, the richest diggings were in the warehouses of Melbourne. Others followed; for the discomfort, privation, and frequent disappointment were such as to make all glad to quit the diggings after the first twelve or eighteen months' trial. Indeed, no one settles down to gold-mining as the business of his life; and the settlers will tell you that they now find at their annual sheep-shearing the very same "old hands" as in former years, though these carried off their full share of the first golden glut. At the present moment, you would find that a very large proportion of the actual miners had not been more than eighteen months in the colony.

The life of the digger is simple, regular, and, on the whole, healthy. His dress is a blue elastic vest, or *jersey*, like that worn by sailors, and thick moleskin trowsers. During winter he wears an outer coarse serge shirt. He has a plain leather belt, in which he carries his "fossicking" knife, used in picking out the gold from holes and crevices. If obliged to stand in water at his work, he cases his legs in a huge pair of watertight boots. Rising at daybreak, the party first prepare and despatch

their meal, and then sally out to their "hole:" if distant, they carry their dinner, never forgetting the tin-pot for making their tea. At sundown they return, bringing the results of the day's work in a small bag or an old match-box. Supper is prepared, and consists, like the other meals, of beef or mutton, bread, and tea. The gold obtained during the day, having been carefully washed, is now divided, or added to the general store, kept perhaps in an old pickle-bottle, which must then be quietly secreted under the earthern floor of the tent, or elsewhere. The evening is spent in chatting, smoking, and reading the "Argus" or some of Chambers's publications, over the rude fireplace of turf or stone which forms one end of the tent or hut. At an early hour all are asleep on their straw matrasses raised on rough frames, the legs of which are stuck into the ground. A loaded pistol generally forms part of the establishment, but is now rarely needed.

The excited, bustling, battling life of the earlier diggers is well struck off in the following lines, which appeared during the first months of the gold discoveries: —

"SUCH IS LIFE ON THE FOREST CREEK.

"When the sun shoots forth his rosy beams,
At the early dawn of morning,
Up starts the digger from golden dreams
A life of laziness scorning:
Digging here,
Cradling there,
Readily, merrily,
Cheerily, steadily,
Toiling hard for the gold we seek,
Such is life on the Forest Creek!

" We first mark out a good large square,
On a likely spot of ground, Sir,
And we say if gold is anywhere,
'Tis here it ought to be found, Sir:
Trying here,
Prospecting there,
Carefully, warily,
Knowingly, charily,
Thus a likely 'pitch' we seek,
Such is life on the Forest Creek!

" Then ten to one comes a bouncing blade,
To swear you've taken his ground, Sir,
'Why, you crawler, see, the mark of my spade
Is a foot within your bound, Sir:'
Swearing here,
Tearing there,
Angrily bouncing,
Threatening, trouncing,
Forced to fight for the gold we seek,
Such is life on the Forest Creek!

" 'You've twice more ground than you can begin,
Are you marking out for farming?'
'Not so big as the stockyard you've pitched in,
So give us no more yarning:'
Warring here,
Jarring there,
Noisily wrangling,
Always jangling,
Quarrelling o'er the gold we seek,
Such is life on the Forest Creek!

" But when disputes are squared at last,
To work we go with a will, Sir,
The pick and spade fly quick and fast,
The empty purse to fill, Sir:

Shovelling here,
Picking there,
Hardly toiling,
Sorely moiling,
Fairly earned is the gold we seek,
Such is life on the Forest Creek!

"When the 'specks' at last begin to show,
Out comes the ready knife, Sir,
And cautiously follows the vein below
With the precious nuggets rife, Sir,
Peering here,
Poking there,
Softly, warily,
Scraping charily,
Hunting sharp for the gold we seek,
Such is life on the Forest Creek!

"With the setting sun our work is o'er,
And we homeward trudge our way, Sir,
And think of our toil and sweat no more
As we count the gains of the day, Sir,
Weighing here,
Dividing there,
Justly, fairly,
Actly squarely,
Sharing out the gold we seek,
Such is life on the Forest Creek!"

Owing to the large infusion of the Van Diemen's Land element in the mining population during the first months after the discovery of gold, the ear of every one resident at the diggings was at that time continually assailed by the most revolting, blasphemous, and obscene language, and the eye shocked with brutal and savage sights. But the brutality of half-drunken men was some-

thing less hideous than the scurrilous rage and tiger-like ferocity of infuriate women. The female convict becomes more thoroughly debased and shameless than the male. In the case of some, the effect of penal life is such that, in expression of countenance, talk, and dress, they seem to have nothing in common with their countrywomen, from whose society and sympathies they are cut off.

The men, however, are bad enough. About two months after the discovery of the rich gold-field of Forest Creek, two diggers, who were camped not far from me at the adjacent Fryer's Creek, after combining to rob their other "mate" or partner of his share of their joint stock of gold, resorted to a neighbouring "sly grog-shop," got drunk, and, while returning to their tent, quarrelled over the distribution of the plunder. After a storm of mutual abuse and blasphemy, one seized a firebrand from their fire, and was about to attack his comrade, when the latter raised his miner's pick and drove it into the shoulder of the other as deliberately as if he had been made of solid rock instead of flesh and blood. The man was not, however, struck down, and they prepared for a deadly fight, when I persuaded one or two others to assist me in separating them. Still, however, they cursed and defied each other like fiends. At length the savage who had wounded his mate tore down their little tent, and strode away with whatever he pleased to take from the ruins of their home. The third mate — a young, but heavy, sullen, and stupid-looking fellow — was skulking inside the tent, and seemed afraid to face the two hardened villains who had conspired to rob him. He went off in the vain hope of obtaining redress from the police authorities, who were quartered

some four miles distant. As to the wounded man, we pulled off his red *jersey*, and found the blood spirting up from the wound on his shoulder. We took him to our camp, and some of my people bathed his wound, and did all they could for him. The poor wretch seemed grateful; but when I attempted to extract from him where they had obtained the grog which had kindled the quarrel, with a keen cunning glance he replied, "They have been treacherous to me, but I won't be treacherous to them." He thought, and truly, that I should take measures to have the nest of iniquity rooted out, and the owners punished.

Such scenes are now quite unknown at the old centres of the mining population, but may still be witnessed among the motley crowds that invariably rush to every newly-opened and popular gold-field. Sometimes the comic and ridiculous is strangely mixed up with the horrible. I happened to visit the Mac Ivor Diggings not long after they were discovered in 1853. Thousands were already collected. Many hundreds of tents dotted the flats, and gullies, and rocky knolls; large areas of gold-bearing ground had already been torn up, and were being still wrought. Busy parties were cradling and "puddling" at the side of the creek. As I rode along the main road which passed right through this active bustling scene I noticed a characteristic little drama close to the roadside. Two diggers, apparently just arrived on the ground, were having high words together, while a well-dressed young woman — who might have been the wife of one and the sister of the other — stood by, trying hard to reconcile them. Not, however, by tears or entreaties. Far otherwise. When high words grew to

blows, and a fight seemed imminent, the pacific young lady seized upon a bucket of water which happened to stand close by, and threw it, bucket and all, at the heads of the disputants! This sudden diversion proved perfectly successful. The attention of the combatants was withdrawn from each other to their new assailant, and their squabble was abruptly terminated. These are the little wayside pictures in life at the diggings.

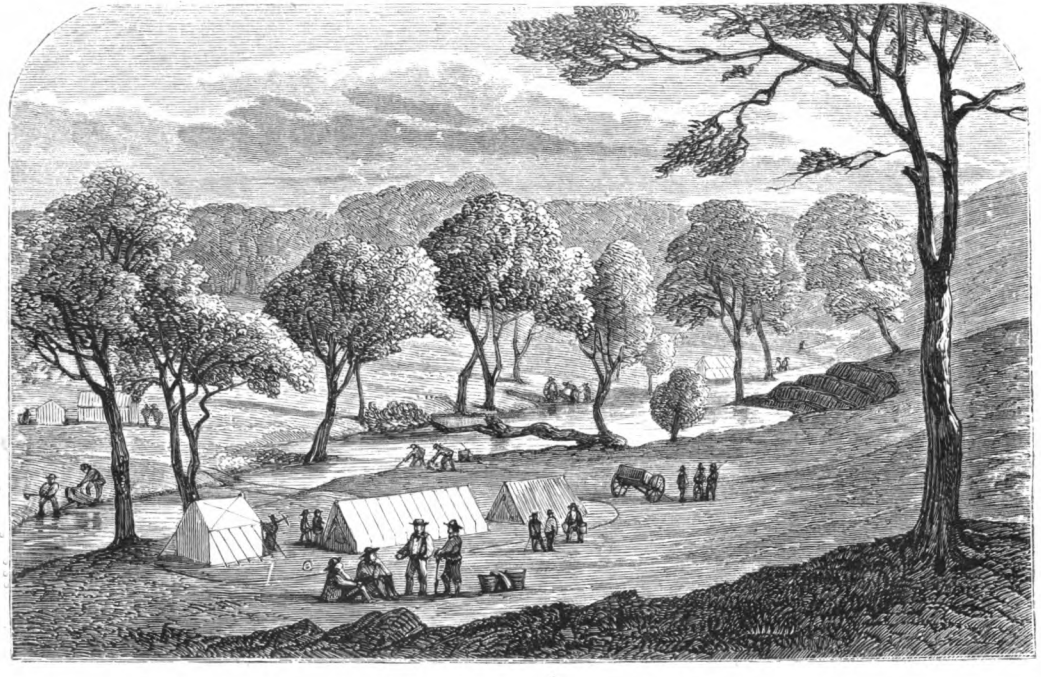
The first generation of diggers worked too hard to have any time for amusements. They found excitement enough in the chances of the lottery they were embarked in, where the prizes were buckets of gold and monster nuggets. More recently, a travelling circus has established itself at Bendigo, and another at Ballarat, both, I believe, with success.

Sunday is observed by a rigid abstinence from mining labour, but there are few signs of its being a day dedicated to Religion. It is kept idle, not holy. Some go out shooting in the forest, some visit their friends in distant gullies, some doze out the hours at home. A very small minority attend a place of public worship. Clergymen of the Churches of England and Scotland are stationed at a few of the principal gold-fields, but their ministrations can extend over but a small part of their respective districts. There are also a few Wesleyan tent-chapels, where "local preachers," selected from their co-religionists among the diggers, conduct public worship, and address decorous and apparently devout congregations.

Mode of Working. — According to the Government regulations, each licensed miner is allowed to appropriate an area of 10 feet square, so that the "claim" of a party

ought to vary in size according to its number: however, neither the digger nor the authorities carry out this rule very rigidly, except in cases of dispute between adjacent parties. When the site for working has been carefully selected, the "claim" of the party is marked out by a peg placed at each corner. Whatever lies beneath that area is the property of the owners of the claim, but no more; so that if your claim be upon an auriferous quartz vein, unless it be quite vertical, at a certain depth both quartz and gold pass altogether out of your "hole."* In the earlier days of the diggings it was common to open a large pit, and remove the gold from the bottom. Now, however, the workings are in much deeper deposits than those first discovered, and there is more mining skill; so that, instead of the open pit, it is customary to sink a square or round shaft 3 or 4 feet in diameter down to the gold-bearing deposit or "bottom," and then to *drive*, or excavate horizontally, in search of the precious metal, if there be none visible at the bottom of the shaft. In sinking the shaft, the clay, gravel, &c. is hoisted to the surface either by a simple rope and bucket, or by a windlass, or by a long lever. The latter is, I believe, borrowed from California, but it exactly resembles the contrivance for raising water from the Nile for purposes of irrigation known as the *shadoof* or "pole and bucket," as used at this day by the Egyptian peasant, and by the ancient inhabitants of the valley of the Nile 3000 years ago, as proved by the monumental sculptures still extant. The Australian apparatus is simply a long pole

* Workings of this kind are, however, very rare.



VIEW ON CAMPBELL'S CREEK MOUNT ALEXANDER.

Diggers washing out the Gold.

tied loosely to the top of a strong upright post. One end of the pole is heavily weighted. The bucket is suspended to the other end by a rope. On pulling down the rope the bucket descends to the bottom of the shaft, and, when filled with earth, it is drawn up by the leverage of the weighted end of the pole. The auriferous earth or "washing-stuff," when brought to the surface, is carefully piled up, the miner below having first picked out any large and conspicuous *nuggets*, and deposited them in his little match-box. The "washing-stuff" is now carted down to the creek, or the nearest water-hole. If the party have no cart of their own, the carting will cost them from 5*s*. to 2*l*. or even 3*l*. a load, according to the distance.

The method of washing the earth has been also much modified by time and experience. At first, all was done by the *cradle* or *rocker*, and the tin dish. In the first flush of Ballarat I have seen, at the base of its "Golden Point," then bristling with diggers, a large pool completely encircled with cradles, amounting to some hundreds; and from afar their rocking was like the sound of distant thunder. But the cradle, though capable of sifting the gold from gravel and light soil, was found very ill adapted to liberate it from the stiff clays of the Victoria Gold-fields. The diggers now commonly use the "puddling-tub." This is merely one-half of a porter cask. The tub is half filled with the "washing-stuff;" water is baled in from the creek, and the whole worked about with the spade, the miner cutting up and turning over the clay till it gradually is dissolved in the water; and as the water becomes charged with earth it is poured from the tub, and a fresh

supply added. By this process, the clay and earth are gradually washed away, and nothing but clean gravel, sand, and gold remains. The gold is now readily separated from the gravel by means of a cradle, or simply by a tin dish. In the latter case, the dish is held half immersed obliquely in the water, and the gravel gradually washed away from the gold, by the dexterous handling of the dish. This "puddling-tub" is doubtless a very rude and primitive contrivance, but it is well adapted to the habits of the migratory digger, who probably visits several gold-fields during the course of a year, and carries his tub with him.

The Californian "Long-Tom" is a more efficient apparatus than the last; but it requires a running stream, and therefore is only available at certain times and places. It consists of a trough about 16 inches wide and 10 or 12 feet long, tilted so that water will flow rapidly down it. An iron grating, perforated with holes as large as a sixpence, forms the lower end, and is tilted up in an opposite direction to that of the trough, so that earth and stones, washed down the trough, lodge on the grating. The head of the trough must be constantly supplied with water, either from a stream or by a pump; and thus a smart current is constantly pouring down the inclined trough. The auriferous earth is thrown in at the head, and as it is washed down by the stream, it is worked about and turned back with the spade; the earth and clay are quickly dissolved and washed away by the stream; and when the clean gravel reaches the lower end, it is arrested by the iron grating and removed with the shovel, while the gold and sand fall through the perforations into a box placed

beneath, the contents of which must afterwards be washed to extract the gold. This method is much more rapid than the other, and is commonly used during the winter in re-working old diggings, or in extracting gold left in the "tailings" of the cradles of former and less careful washers; these tailings sometimes yielding three ounces per load. *Sluicing* resembles the process last described, except that the trough is much longer and narrower.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DIGGINGS AND DIGGERS — *continued.*

The earlier diggers—Forest Creek Post-office—"Missing friends"—"Digger-hunting—Discontent—Insecurity of property—"Night fossickers"—Deputation to the Governor—The "Diggers' League"—Grievances — Stump orators — Organised movement — Monster meetings — Concessions of Government — Recent riot at Ballarat —Difficulties of Sir C. Hotham.

I HAVE now spoken of the diggings, and have noticed the habits and labours of the miners. In conclusion, I have to say a few words of their character and history as a separate class of the colonial community.

Here it is very necessary to draw a strong line of demarcation between the diggers, properly so called, and those bands of ruffians who have ever haunted the mines, and for whose crimes their victims, the diggers, are no more responsible than are the people of Great Britain; indeed, not so much, for these malefactors are the exported felons of England. They are regarded by the genuine diggers very much as "native dogs" and wild blacks are by the squatters—a public pest, to be hunted down and exterminated.

When the wonderful discoveries of Ballarat and Mount Alexander were blazed through the neighbouring colonies in October of 1851, Van Diemen's Land and South Australia (Adelaide) emptied their male population on the shores of Victoria;—some thought, indeed, that the days

of Adelaide were numbered. The exodus was so sudden (especially in South Australia) that the women were generally left at their homes; their husbands were to hurry to the golden scramble, and to write as soon as possible to their wives an account of their success. But alas! the Post-office had shared in the general paralysis which had seized every department of the Government*, caused at once by the want of hands and the sudden increase of work. At this time, there was but one wretched post-office at Mount Alexander, kept by a private, irresponsible individual, in a tent. Here you might every week have seen a crowd of sturdy, bearded, rough-clad diggers: many had walked some weary miles from a distant gully on the same errand before, and that several times. After much crowding and battling, they make their way up to the little hole in the tent where letters are delivered, and ask for letters for such a one. Then there is a long pause, while the man within is looking over a number of greasy, unclassified letters. At length the same oft-repeated chilling answer is given, "No letters for that name to-day;" and the anxious husband trudges back again, thinking as he goes of his distant home in the Bush, and of her he left behind there; and concluding with a bitter curse on the post-office and every one connected with it.

From whatever cause, the South Australian strangers complained that their letters never reached them. And

* It is only fair to state, that very great improvements have recently been made in the administration of the Colonial Post Office.

many, after long suspense, returned to their homes to bring back their wives to the gold-fields. But, in the meantime, many of the latter, equally anxious and equally unable to account for the silence of their lords, had started to Victoria to seek them. It can readily be understood what confusion, embarrassment, and distress this often led to. The husband would perhaps be sailing out of the harbour while the wife was entering it. At the diggings, it is much more difficult to find any particular individual than even in London; for the tents are ranged without order over a vast area; there is no register of names, and the occupants of one tent can never tell the name even of their next neighbour. Failing some better mode of intercommunication, trees of the forest were now converted into advertising stands. Every conspicuous trunk was covered with notices, often ill-spelt, in which friends informed friends how they might discover their abode; and wives notified to their distressed husbands that they had arrived, and were in anxious search of them. In a walk through the diggings you might see a hundred of these notices, beginning with the formula "If this should meet the eye of," &c. When the newspapers came to be circulated at the mines, these advertisements were transferred to their columns, and there they still form a very characteristic feature, under the heading "Missing Friends." I subjoin a few of these, as contributions to the early history of Victoria. The first was copied *verbatim* from a tree near Forest Creek:—

"If this should meet the eye of my wife, or of the carrier who brought her and my articles from Melbourne, she will find me at

Saw Pit Gully—or if any person can give any information of the same, they will greatly oblige

"The Distressed Husband,
"JOHN BROWN."

The following are from the "Argus" newspaper, published at Melbourne:—

"Mary.—Mrs. Stephen, by the Spitfire from Sydney, November 21st. It is no dream, and I am desolate. Ballarat, or office of this paper."

"James Fowle.—if this should meet your eye, your mother Mrs. Hurbard would like to see you, as she is not expected to live; address to Little Bourke-street."

"Mr. Jackson, of Collingwood, will oblige Ellen Barnham by letting her know if he can tell her where her husband is at present; address Ellen Barnham, 22, Collins-street."

"Laura Keene.—If this should come under the notice of the above-named lady, who is supposed to be in Melbourne, this is to inform her that Henry Keene is at present at the Bendigo diggings, and is very anxious to hear from her. A letter addressed to the Post Office, Sandhurst, Bendigo, will reach him. Any information respecting the above lady would be gladly received by the advertiser."

"Mary Barry M'Greath, from the county of Limerick, parish of Rockhill, Ireland, wishes to hear from her two daughters Mary and Bridget, who left Newcastle, Ireland, for Australia, in the year 1848. Any information addressed to her at Natick, Massachusetts, U.S.A. will be thankfully received."

"To Charles.—Charley—you will find a letter at the P———n Post Office for you; am perfectly aware I deserve no forgiveness; would like to see you, if only once more; will you call? formerly Apollo; S. Jenny."

"If John Nelson Anstead, who was wrecked in the Monumental City, and late of New York, will call at the Emerald Hill Hotel, he will hear of his wife, just arrived."

"If this should meet the eye of Sally Moylan, of Toona, County Clare, she is requested to write to Michael Heffernan."

"Should this meet the eye of Mr. Jones, who left Hull about four years ago, he will greatly oblige by writing to those he forgot to say good-bye to."

The diggers are hardy, active, enterprising, and industrious, patient under suffering, indifferent to political strife, except in questions where they have a direct interest at stake; very far from obsequious to public functionaries, yet with all that instinctive veneration for constituted authority which distinguishes the Englishman from the American. Lieutenant-Colonel Valiant, who commanded a military force at Bendigo during a period of great public excitement, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, says: — "As a people, the diggers on the gold-fields are the most orderly and well-disposed body that I have ever seen in any part of the world where I have had the honour of serving Her Majesty: at the same time there are numbers of very indifferent characters indeed, who, as in other countries, are always ready to seize a favourable opportunity to create disturbance for their own infamous purposes."* Yet, in spite of this respect for the powers that be, they have, from various unhappy causes, been almost perpetually embroiled with the local government: sometimes the dispute was at the Ovens Diggings, sometimes at Ballarat, and then at Bendigo.

One of the most fruitful sources of discontent was the method of collecting the gold revenue. When the first discoveries were made at Ballarat, the Melbourne govern-

* Letter of Lieutenant-Colonel Valiant, laid on the table of the Legislative Council, 18th October, 1853.

ment, following the example of that at Sydney, issued regulations by which all miners were required to procure a monthly license to dig for gold, and to pay 30*s.* for the same. But how was this tax to be enforced among a migratory population, living in tents scattered through a forest? The mode adopted was, to send out armed bands of police, who, coming down suddenly on a gully or flat, spread themselves over it, demanding of every one his license. A few mounted troopers formed part of the force, to cut off defaulters who might attempt to fly. All who could not produce their license were captured and marched off, probably some miles, to the nearest magistrate, and, after some detention, were either fined 5*l.*, or imprisoned for a month. Such a system necessarily led to great discontent and irritation. At some of the gold-fields a curious plan was hit upon for evading these inquisitorial visits. No sooner was a party of police seen approaching than the diggers raised the cry of "Joe! Joe!" The cry was taken up, and presently the whole length of the gully rang with the shout "Joe! Joe! Joe!" and of course all defaulters instantly made off for the depths of the forest.

The dissatisfaction was exasperated by the method of collecting the license-fee. The collector did not call on the tax-payer, but the latter had to seek the collector. The digger was compelled to walk from his own gully to the Commissioner's camp, — distant, perhaps, several miles, — and then often wait for hours under a fierce sun, while a crowd of others, who had arrived before him, were paying their 30*s.*, or weighing out their half-ounce of gold. Greater facilities were indeed subsequently offered

for the payment of the fee, but the mode of enforcing it continued the same. The diggers complained loudly and unceasingly of these harsh and un-English measures. "First you tax our labour," said they, "and then you collect your tax at the point of the bayonet." The dislike to the system was universal; disputes were frequent, and collisions between the police and diggers sometimes occurred.

Another of the diggers' grievances was the extreme insecurity of life and property on the mines. While the police force were snugly housed at head-quarters, in a peaceable and orderly neighbourhood, the populous but remote gullies were the nightly scenes of deeds of robbery and violence. Every evening men were knocked down and brutally treated, or "stuck up" and robbed. Every night horses were stolen, tents broken into, and "holes" plundered of gold by the "night fossickers,"—miscreants who watched for the richest *holes* during the day, marked them, and plundered them at night. In October, 1852, at a place called *Moonlight Flat* (near Forest Creek), these desperadoes had become so numerous and shameless, and their outrages so frequent, that the miners rose *en masse* against them. A public meeting was convened; blue-shirted diggers made stirring appeals to their auditory; a deputation was appointed to proceed instantly to Melbourne, to remonstrate with the Government, and to implore it to adopt energetic measures for extirpating the "hordes of ruffians" that infested their neighbourhood, and the persons of many of whom were well known there.

In the early part of the year 1853 an arbitrary act of a Sub-Inspector of Police elicited a sudden burst of popu-

lar indignation close to the Government Camp at Forest Creek. At ten o'clock one night three tents were assailed and dismantled by the police, and the owners sent adrift. They were charged with having illicitly sold spirituous liquors; but this charge eventually fell to the ground, and the sufferers were declared the victims of a cruel tyranny, the perpetrators of which were held up to public scorn and infamy. Some of the most enthusiastic formed themselves into a "Committee for defending the Rights of the People," hastily called a "diggers' meeting," harangued the multitude from a cart on the rights and the wrongs of the diggers, and demanded restitution to the sufferers,—which was ultimately conceded.

But all these demonstrations were merely local and transient. About the middle of 1853, however, a much more serious and organised insubordination began to manifest itself. This movement commenced at Bendigo, but the other mining districts soon joined it: a general "Diggers' League" was formed, and a convention held, in which the several Gold Felds were represented by delegates. The present agitation was excited by the old grievance of the Licensing System. The general ill-will which this had generated was like an old sore, unskilfully healed, continually breaking forth into open discontent.

At the first outbreak of the gold discoveries the monthly license-fee was fixed at 30*s*. Two or three months later, however, the local executive, wishing probably to repress the general rush to the mines, gave notice that the fee was to be doubled. Upon this, the diggers mustered in force at public meetings on the Gold Fields, and showed such a sturdy front of resistance that

the authorities precipitately withdrew their impolitic measure; and the thirty-shilling license-fee remained in force, and its imposition was duly sanctioned by an Act of the Colonial Council.

In the first prolific yield of the Gold Fields, when it was no uncommon thing for a party of four to divide hundreds or even thousands of pounds after two or three months' work,—when the prizes were many, and the blanks few,—perhaps thirty shillings a month was not too much to exact for a ticket in the lottery. But two short years had witnessed a great change in gold-mining. The total produce was declining, though the number of diggers was on the increase. No more was heard of buckets of gold, and monster nuggets, and holes turning out a thousand ounces. Stories of disappointment and disgust were much more common. The majority, perhaps, got "fair wages," but vast numbers, instead of making a fortune, spent what little they had, and left the Diggings for the towns almost penniless. Most of the diggers were, indeed, now working upon those less productive parts of the old Gold Fields, which had been neglected in the first scramble,—the mere leavings of the earlier diggers. Other districts were being wrought; but they were not comparable to Bendigo, Forest Creek, and Ballarat. In short, it was indisputable that the average yield per man had very sensibly decreased. Yet the original license-fee was still rigorously exacted, and enforced in the harsh and irritating manner already described.

Had the mining population been now composed of the same elements as it had been two years earlier, the spirit of discontent would probably still have been manifested

merely by individual murmuring, by maledictions on the Government, loud and fierce, and by sundry letters in the "Argus" newspaper, the general vent for the angry feeling of the aggrieved. But among the mixed multitude which had been attracted to the mines, were some who had been trained to political agitation in the old country; men who much preferred the excitement and profit of stump-oratory to the patient and often unproductive toil of gold digging. As all were equal at the mines, and there were no commanding reputations already established, it was not difficult to install themselves as chiefs and representatives of the people. Here was an excellent field for their new vocation. On the one hand an unpopular Government; on the other vast masses of working men suffering under real and substantial grievances. They began work in earnest at Bendigo. They posted huge manuscript placards on the trees and tents, calling a public meeting of the diggers in a central spot, and close to the head-quarters of the Government officials. There they harangued the multitude in inflammatory terms, fluently expatiating on the sufferings of the diggers, and the injustice and hardship of the licensing system. The Colonial Government they stigmatised as imbecile and bound over to the squatters; the local authorities as haughty and tyrannical. The diggers, they said, formed the most important as well as numerous section of the community; all other classes thrived and grew opulent by their labours; yet they were despised, neglected, and trampled upon. They were the most heavily taxed, yet they had no representatives in the Legislative Council. While the digger paid no less than 18*l.* a year for the privilege of working

on his ten feet square, out of which he often got nothing, the lordly squatter had his thousands of acres for the paltry rent of 10*l.* or 20*l.* a year. Then again, if the miner should fail to pay the heavy impost on the day it was due he was treated as a criminal, and marched off under an armed escort to a distant spot. The diggers had borne these indignities too long and too patiently. Let them now arise, show themselves worthy of the name of British freemen, and, if necessary, repel force by force. Such was the general tone of these orators, though many contented themselves with recommending *moral* pressure to redress their wrongs. The agitators, however, were not satisfied with making speeches and getting up sudden bursts of popular feeling, which, like the blaze of a rocket, might pass and leave no trace behind. They organised a system of concerted action, established a central committee and sub-committees, brigaded the distant gullies, convoked monster meetings, till at length things assumed such a formidable aspect that Government concentrated every available soldier in the colony at Bendigo, and made policemen do sentinel duty at Melbourne. The new political leaders were deputed to proceed to Melbourne and obtain an interview with the Lieutenant Governor, to solicit a reduction of the license-fee. To Melbourne accordingly they went. There they were informed by his Excellency that the law must be enforced, and they returned to Bendigo without obtaining any promise or hope of redress. More monster meetings were now held, and eventually the 1st of October was fixed as a grand field-day, on which the deputies should present themselves at the Government quarters, offer for the license-fee a sum much less than the legal

one, and, when that was refused, express their determination to pay nothing more, and deliver themselves up to custody. On the day appointed an immense multitude assembled. As they marched by, marshalled in ranks, some fired defiant pistols towards the Government camp. They halted within gun-shot of the Commissioners' tents, and sent forward their deputation. Of course those in command refused to make martyrs of the self-immolating deputies, and they eventually evaded the dilemma in which the diggers had attempted to place them by notifying that no license-fee would be enforced that month: and before the next had arrived, the Melbourne executive had proposed and passed an enactment reducing the fee to 1*l.* for one month, and a less sum proportionately for three or six months. Thus ended for the time the war of the licenses. But the grievance of non-representation in the Legislative Council remains and involves a problem not very easy of solution, namely, this: — A large proportion of the community, intelligent and moderately wealthy, are yet without any settled habitation, residing sometimes in one part of the country and sometimes in another. How are they to exercise the elective franchise?

While these pages are passing through the press, intelligence has been received from Melbourne * that the war of reprisals between the Government and the diggers, after smouldering for a twelvemonth, has again broken

* Of the date Oct. 27. 1854.

out, and with all its former menacing character. The scene is now at Ballarat. The immediate cause was the murder of a man near a low public house well known as the rendezvous of thieves and miscreants. Suspicion lighted on the publican, one Bentley, a man of bad character; but he was discharged by the coroner, being, as the diggers supposed, shielded by those in authority. Subsequently, ten of the jurors protested against the coroner's treatment of the evidence, and called the inquest a caricature. The case was now, on the demand of the populace, re-investigated by the magistrates. The suspected publican pleaded an *alibi*, and was again discharged, though the evidence seemed to criminate him. The diggers now assembled *en masse* 12,000 or 14,000 strong, deliberately set fire to the public house, the police looking on helplessly, and then quietly returned to their tents. After this riot the magistrates invited all well-disposed persons to enroll themselves as special constables, but scarcely any offered their services or showed any disposition to support the authorities. This seemed the more remarkable because, at the Governor's recent visit to the mines, he had been received with acclamations, which had been thought to indicate the absence of all discontent. But since that visit the pursuit and capture of unlicensed diggers, "man-hunting" or "digger-hunting" as the miners call it, had been carried on with renewed activity, and had awakened all the old exasperation against the government. While this practice is enforced there never can be lasting tranquillity at the mines. Such oft-repeated outbreaks and sudden kindling of the fierce democracy of the miners show beyond all question "something rotten in the state

of Denmark." The suspected murderer would, it is believed, have most certainly suffered instant punishment by the mob if they could have found him. He has since been once more apprehended and was to have been tried before the proper tribunal.

The local authorities arrested two persons as having been implicated in the riot; but they were bailed out and carried off in triumph by an excited mob. Large subscriptions were being made for their defence, and two able counsel secured. Such was the state of affairs when the last mail left Melbourne. Sir Charles Hotham has no light task before him in his viceroyalty: the diggers arrayed against government — the landowners against the squatters — and the whole colony against the Colonial Office in matters of the highest importance. Fortunately he starts on his career with a large stock of popularity.

CHAPTER VII.

TRAVELLING IN THE BUSH.

Cape Otway forest — The "Hot Wind" — Black Thursday — Ashes transported to great distances — Notes of a tour through the forest — Abandoned mission station — Facilities for forming reservoirs — Camp in the Bush — The forest after the fires — Forcing a passage — Magnificent growth of trees — Dreary night — Luxuriant vegetation — Wild sea-coast — Carboniferous rocks — The forest on fire — Return through the Coast Ranges — Contrasts — Loutit Bay — View of the coast at daybreak — Return.

In order to give the reader some idea of the scenes and incidents of Australian travel, I shall here offer a few extracts from my journals and notes, written on the spot or soon afterwards; such being always more faithful and life-like than more elaborate accounts drawn up subsequently.

The first extract is a journal of a tour through a very extraordinary and almost unknown district, and under very uncommon circumstances; so that it must not be regarded as illustrative of what is seen every day in the "Bush." I have already alluded to the wild country of the Cape Otway Promontory; to its steep shelving valleys, its beetling precipices, its dense forest of gigantic trees, its sun-proof shades and tangled mazes: this is the district traversed. The journey was commenced about a fortnight after this forest, and indeed almost the entire colony, was desolated by the

most terrific fires ever known in Victoria, which committed such ravages that the day (February 6. 1851) has ever since been memorable in the annals of the colony under the name of "Black Thursday." "Bush fires" are very common during summer. They originate from the spread of a camp fire, from a lighted match carelessly thrown on the dry grass, or some other accident. Once kindled, the fire advances till it encounters a road or river, or is beaten back by the wind. To avoid such dangers the settlers burn a circle around their huts and homesteads; so that, when the advancing fire reaches the burnt ring, it ceases from want of fuel. These conflagrations generally occur when the north or hot wind is blowing from that great natural furnace, the central Australian desert.

The hot wind is in fact the Simoom of Australia, and results apparently from the same cause as that of Africa, namely, radiation from the scorched lands of the interior. It rarely lasts an entire day, and is always followed by the cool south wind. Sometimes there is a mere momentary pause between the gale from the north and that which follows from the south. The approach of the hot wind is indicated many hours before it arrives by a rapid fall of the barometer. It usually commences between seven and ten in the morning, and lasts till the afternoon, commonly subsiding at sunset if not previously. During its prevalence the cloud of dust that hangs over Melbourne may be seen from the mountains thirty miles distant. In winter the north becomes a cool wind.

The fatal "Black Thursday" occurred after a long season of heat and drought had rendered everything dry and combustible. The hot wind blew a hurricane. The

flames swept far and wide, leaping over all ordinary barriers. Every forest was on fire at once. Firebrands were blown over wide rivers and kindled new conflagrations on the opposite shores. During that day many hundred square leagues were devastated by flames which travelled with incredible speed and resistless fury. The progress of such fires is exactly described by the vivid imagery of the Hebrew Prophet: — "The land is as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness." Houses, homesteads, fences, implements, — all were destroyed. Where carts had stood, now were only seen two iron tires lying on the ground. Crops and ricks were consumed, and the whole country left a mere blackened waste. Many persons were burnt to death; others saved themselves by standing in the "water-holes," or in the sea, and even there were scorched; for the fires burnt down to the water's edge. Shortly after this dreadful visitation I visited what had been a snug farmhouse near Geelong. It was now a black wreck of roofless walls. Gardens, vineyard, and stable were all destroyed. Camp-ovens, iron-pots, and broken crockery were strewed about: and, as a sufferer said to me, "all the property left might be carried away in a wheelbarrow." In the stable were the remains of a burnt horse. A dog and some poultry were the only living things about the desolated place. The destruction of property on "Black Thursday" was immense, and many of the small farmers lost the fruits of years of toil and frugality. Whilst the flames were raging over a thousand square leagues of forest, the gale carried the finer cinders over the mountains to Gipps Land, and across Bass's Straits, entirely obscuring the sun; so that

in Gipps Land, according to many eye-witnesses, it was dark as night at three o'clock in the afternoon. But even this was not the limit to which traces of the fires extended. According to credible witnesses, fine charcoal dust fell on board ships lying off New Zealand forty-eight hours after the conflagration in Victoria. When we remember that fine volcanic ashes were, during an eruption in the island of Sumbawa in the Indian Ocean, transported by the wind to the distance of 800 miles, we shall be more ready to give credence to this statement.* It was, then, about a fortnight after the terrific "Black Thursday," that I started on this tour through the forests of Cape Otway, accompanied by an intelligent friend, one of the oldest settlers in the colony, now a large sheep-holder, and, what was more important, an accomplished "bushman," who could make his way over the country without sun, stars, or compass, and could light a fire though every twig and leaf were saturated with rain. We had with us as guide through the forest a wood-splitter, one of the few who knew anything of the district, and who had followed his calling at a little settlement on this part of the coast.

A few particulars relative to the physical geography of the district traversed will throw light on the desultory "Journal" which follows. A glance at the map will show that the promontory of Cape Otway is a flat triangle, with its blunt apex pointing southwards into the stormy waters of the Pacific. One main range of hills, forming the backbone of the promontory, runs north and south, and throws off numerous lateral spurs, some of which,

* See Lyell's Principles of Geology, chap. xxviii.

advancing into the sea, form rocky headlands, while the intervening spaces become sandy bays or coves, having a strip of flat, sandy, cultivable land between the sea and the hills, varying from 100 yards to a mile in width. Previous to "Black Thursday" the interior was covered with a dense forest, and impenetrable undergrowth or scrub. The undergrowth was almost wholly destroyed by the fires. The forest remained, blackened, charred, and ravaged by the flames. Such a country is of course unsuited for pastoral pursuits, and there is only one station in the district: this is near the lighthouse at the Cape, which is the point first made by ships bound for Melbourne. The most prominent of the headlands form three shallow bays on the eastern coast: Loutit Bay to the north, Addis Bay, and Apollo Bay to the south. The south-east gales cause a tremendous swell to roll in on the shore; and the anchorage is so insecure that the few craft that traded there were often driven on shore. This wild, inhospitable, and rarely-visited coast is well pictured in Byron's description of the Greek pirate's island:—

"It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
With cliffs above, and a broad sandy shore,
Guarded by shoals and rocks as by an host,
With here and there a creek, whose aspect wore
A better welcome to the tempest-tost;
And rarely ceased the haughty billow's roar,
Save on the dead long summer days, which make
The outstretched ocean glitter like a lake."

Probably, however, the "haughty billow's roar" *never* ceases on the shores of Cape Otway.*

* Vast as is the extent of the Otway Forest, it dwindles into a grove compared with the wooded tracts in America. The forests of

NOTES OF A TOUR IN CAPE OTWAY FOREST.*

February 20. 1851. — *Thursday.* Started from Dr. L.'s on the Moorabool river for Beal's Inn. Our caravan included L., myself, a Loutit Bay *splitter* for a guide, and two packhorses. Crossed a naked, rocky lava plain to Pollock's Ford, seven miles. Here we forded the Barwon, left Breguet's vineyard and its purple clusters on our left, and skirted the northern base of the Barrabool Hills. Rounding them we now turned south, over a plain alternately open and lightly timbered. Mount Gellibrand and Mount Hesse lay before us to the right, — probably the principal vents whence flowed the liquid lava that filled up all the ancient valleys and hollows, and advanced its fiery wave to the very base of the Barrabool Hills, which are now *islanded* in a sea of lava. Mount Boninyong, another centre of volcanic agency at some remote period, was visible on the horizon to the north. The plain under our feet was everywhere furrowed by "Dead Men's Graves," and generally covered with the volcanic ash, aptly named by the settlers *buckshot,* and found throughout the country on similar formations. *Buckshot* is always imbedded in a sandy soil, sometimes several feet thick. It is now a fortnight since the country was swept by the fiery hurricane of "Black Thursday," and the young grass is just touching over with green the blackened plain.

the Amazons, in South America, called the *Silvas*, cover a region six times as large as France, extending 1500 miles along the river, and varying in breadth from 350 to 800 miles.

* These Notes have already appeared in an Australian Magazine.

The Cape Otway Ranges, though not visible, were indicated by the thick bank of clouds hanging over the south-west horizon. We reached Beal's Inn at sundown;—not a noisy, filthy, bug-infested hostelry, as might have been expected from some accounts of colonial inns, but as clean and quiet and well-ordered a little place as you might wish to meet with on a Derbyshire trout stream or in a Welsh valley. Near the inn is a small church, lately built, but not yet provided with a clergyman; the colonial demand in the case of the Church of England being greater than the supply, and money being more readily provided than men. This spot, dignified with the name of Winchelsea, is twenty-five miles from Geelong on the main Colac Road, where it crosses the Barwon on a timber bridge. There is the inn, the store, the station, and the church,—the usual rudiments of a Victorian town. Some bright future may, however, still be in store for Winchelsea, when the RAILWAY shall penetrate to the fastnesses of the Otway Forest, and the shrill whistle of the IRON HORSE shall startle the hereditary tenants of its leafy mazes.

Feb. 21.—Started at eight. Followed the Barwon, through open country: Mount Gellibrand, with its low, flattened outline, conspicuous on the right, the Cape Otway Ranges stretching away on the left, clouds and mists enveloping their summits. At Hopkins' Station (seven miles) crossed the Barwon, here contracted into a mere creek or brook, yet still a running stream, after all the drought of the summer. Three or four miles further we entered the outskirts of the ranges and followed up a rich alluvial flat, shut in on either side by hills, and sometimes

flooded by the river. Large herds of cattle were browsing here. Camped at midday on a patch of pasturage near the river which had escaped the general conflagration. On a rising ground, at the head of this marshy valley, stood what was once the Wesleyan Mission Station, with its garden of fruit trees, refreshing the eye amid the blackened waste. The Mission was a melancholy failure, and has long been abandoned by the missionaries. The blacks could not even be persuaded to reside on the spot, much less to embrace the tenets of our faith. Extermination, not Christianisation, appears to be written for the Australian tribes in the mysterious book of the future. The curse upon Ham is still traced in ineffaceable characters upon his posterity.

At this abandoned missionary station we found a mother with her six children, huddled together in a tent, near the black ruins of her former home, which had been destroyed on the terrible Thursday. They were alone on the spot when surrounded by the fire, and were compelled to fly for their lives before and through the flames. Her scorched hands still bore evident marks of the fire; everything was destroyed, and the apples roasted upon the trees. Energy, however, had not been crushed by misfortune: a new slab hut, erected since the fires, was already well nigh ready for the family.

On leaving the Mission Station we entered another long marshy valley, at a higher level than the former. Both these basins might readily, and at little cost, be dammed up, and thus converted into magnificent reservoirs of water, covering an area of many thousands of acres. The advantages thus gained would be immense and various.

First, you would obtain a never-failing and strong current from hence to the sea, and the inhabitants of Geelong and residents on the Barwon would be supplied with pure water during the longest droughts, instead of the stagnant impurities from water-holes, redolent of the putrid carcases of bullocks. Second, large tracts of agricultural and garden land might thus be irrigated, and its produce thereby doubled or trebled. Third, these reservoirs, at a considerable height above the sea-level, would furnish a very great amount of available water power. A chain of mills might be set in motion as the stream advances downwards to its mouth. If nature has denied us the glorious rivers of America, if we have no Rhines or Danubes, still she has granted us extraordinary capabilities of retaining and husbanding our water supply.

After leaving the Mission station we soon entered upon the skirts of the forest, here occasionally opening into glades; and three miles further reached Mr. Roadknight's station. This spot, though encircled by, yet escaped, the flames, and offered some little herbage for our horses. Knowing that we had hard work in store for next day, we determined to push on two or three miles further, to the extreme limit of the unburnt country. The Barwon here runs through a reedy valley of deep alluvial mud, occasionally widening its channel into a morass. Two miles from the last station we crossed it for the *fourth* time, and were now again on the left bank. The valley was on all sides shut in by gentle acclivities; forest timber alternating with open glades; — no rocks nor precipices, nor tumbling cascades, gave Alpine picturesqueness to the sources of the Barwon. It was already past sundown,

and we had reached the edge of the burnt forest. There was some scanty feed for the horses, and excellent water in the stream; but it ran sunk in a deep ditch of soft mud, and was quite inaccessible to our quadrupeds, without imminent peril of their being *bogged*. Water must be somehow conveyed to them; but how? A hat or a saddle-bag was the nearest approach to a bucket at our command. After weighing the comparative advantages of these, we hit upon another expedient, which proved highly successful. Unfolding part of our tent we converted it into a bason, and filled it with water;—and the horses, after some preliminary snorting, came up one by one and drank freely, while we filled and refilled it from the stream. This difficulty surmounted, another misadventure followed. One of the pack-horses trotted off homewards; two others followed the runaway, bearing away our knapsacks and entire commissariat; and presently we were in full pursuit, through a thick tangled forest, and this in the deepening twilight. Nothing could be easier than to lose them in a country so abounding with coverts; but, luckily, the whole troop were suddenly pulled up by a morass, into which the leader plunged, and the others followed. Presently all were brought into our camp. And now the tent was pitched, the fire crackled and blazed, and lighted up the ancient trees. Pannikin-tea, supper, sleep, followed in due order. The forest sank into its own deep primeval silence; the stars shone bright and serene over our heads, while the Cross of the South, and the mysterious Magellanic clouds revolved round what Humboldt calls 'the starless and desert Southern Pole.'

February 22nd. — The morning broke dull, misty,

threatening. At 7 we were *en route*. Our course lay south-west. We began at once to ascend the first slopes of the Cape Otway Hills, leaving the Barwon on our left, hid in a thickly-wooded dell. We were now thirty-eight or forty miles from the coast at Apollo Bay; the whole country between being a dense forest, and all burnt to within a few miles of the sea. As we ascended through the thickening timber all view of distant hill or plain was shut out,—everything except the immediate forest foreground. It soon began to drizzle, and continued raining during the whole of this dismal lugubrious day of toil and travail. We were, in fact, not under a cloud, but *in it*. At first a few reeds and ferns bordered our path; but these soon disappeared, and of all the rich and characteristic vegetation that formed the under-growth of the forest three weeks ago, no trace now remained except the burnt stems or fronds of the fern-tree, which, instead of branching out like the feathery palm, hung down forlornly from the top of the trunk. Every green shrub had been devoured by the flame. On all sides were gigantic trees, tall, and running up a hundred feet without throwing off a single branch. The trunks were completely charred externally, the flames having reached up about a hundred feet, as they fed upon the undergrowth, but the loftiest tops appeared to have escaped. The tops, however, were lost in cloud and mist, so that accurate observation was impossible. Nothing could be more desolate and cheerless. It was too dreary, too monotonously wild even for Salvator Rosa and his bandits. But the difficulties in our path soon engrossed all attention. The track, formerly well-defined and easy, was now almost effaced; to

follow it was out of the question, for it often lay beneath a chaos of huge fallen trunks and branches intertwined. Often it became necessary to make a long detour to avoid these prostrate Goliaths of the forest, which, two or three hundred feet long, would occasionally arch over a ravine, and leave a passage beneath. Thus we had first to seek the old track as a clue through the illimitable forest, and next to discover where, by means of leaping, climbing, and scrambling, the horses might find or make a way through the labyrinth, their riders, of course, on foot. The timber was so dense that the baggage-horses had literally to *force* a passage through for their loads, sometimes carrying away a tree in the effort. So long as they followed close in Indian file, they would not falter or swerve, but no sooner was the file broken than they wandered off anywhere rather than face the great logs and tangled branches that barred up the road. Our guide steered through this misty maze very well, but knew nothing of distance, all distinguishing objects and marks having been destroyed or effaced. The mist and rain increased the general obscurity. We appeared, however, to be following the zigzags of a sharp crest or saddle, with densely timbered gullies and leafy abysses on either side—the Valombrosas of Cape Otway.

The main point of interest in this wonderful forest is the magnificent growth and almost incredible size of the trees. Some that we roughly measured were fifty and sixty feet in circumference five feet from the ground. From thirty to forty feet was perhaps the average girth. Even the lightwood tree grows to a height of a hundred feet. The larger trees are generally hollow near the

roots: sometimes the interior forms a vast cave. They stand straight and erect as fir-trees, which gives the forest an Alpine character. In some the exterior takes the form of graceful Gothic mouldings, and reminds you of the majestic piers of a Cathedral nave.* The colossal limbs and roots, roughened by huge excrescences and fantastically contorted, often assume the most grotesque and *bizarre* forms. All the foliage is at the summit, and thus enjoys the influences of light and sunshine and wind. Who shall tell during how many centuries these patriarchs of the forest have been attaining their enormous bulk? Are they contemporaries of the venerable "cedar saints" of Mount Lebanon? There was no voice of bird nor chirp of insect; all animal life appeared to have perished in the universally raging flames. The wind whistled through their branching tops, far, far over our head. Occasionally was heard the distant crash of a falling trunk, deep and low — the avalanche of the forest!

At nightfall we halted under the lee of a hill, totally ignorant as to the actual distance from our destination. The droppings from the trunk of a great gum tree supplied us with water for our tea, strongly impregnated from its source. Every twig was drenched; but after repeated failures, a fire was kindled and soon lighted up the forest. Our tent, begrimed with charcoal, was spread out on the wet

* I think there can be as little doubt that the old Gothic artists really drew inspiration from such forest scenes, as that the elaborate theory of Sir James Hall and others (which would derive every detail of Gothic Architecture from trees and twigs), has no foundation except in their own fancy. They have run their analogies aground.

earth, and we lay down upon it before the fire on a slippery steep, wet and miserable. My little terrier, whom we had lost while making way through the forest, now came up, wagging his tail, and nestled in close to the blazing logs. The horses, fagged and starved, were tied up near us. The night was pitchy dark; the rain pattered on the leaves; the wind moaned through the tree tops. It was the very *ideal* of lonely dreariness.

Sunday 23rd. — At length morning dawned, foggy, wet, and *triste* as yesterday. By some mysterious mental paradox, some occult law of mind, in virtue of which harsh and uncouth realities become suggestive of beautiful sights and sounds, I awoke at daybreak with one of Moore's sweetest melodies in my ear. Such incongruous associations occur too frequently to be attributed to chance, and are too remarkable to be referred to ordinary causation. But the present was neither time nor place for metaphysics.* Tea was made, beef and bread swallowed, the horses saddled (while chewing and striving for burnt sticks), and we were once more in motion. On, on we toiled, as yesterday, making a mile, sometimes only half a mile, an hour; now turning to the right, now to the left, to find a practicable passage. At length we reached a streamlet running in soft

* Mr. Kinglake, in Eothen, mentions that when travelling in the desert one Sunday morning, seated on his camel, and wide awake, the sun flaming above, and the hot sands dazzling beneath, he distinctly heard the chime of his village bells. The connection between the Sunday morning and the church bells is sufficiently obvious: but it is difficult to understand what there could be in a dripping forest, a misty morning, and an expiring bush fire, to awaken in the memory the echoes of "Flow on thou shining river."

mud. Had the thirsty horses been allowed to drink, they would have been hopelessly bogged, so they must clear it at a leap. Soon after we passed a quagmire, fed by springs, and wet even in the longest drought. We were now nearing the coast, and looked out anxiously for the sea. Thought of the Ten Thousand Greeks and the Spanish conquerors of America, and of their feelings on first descrying the ocean. At length we heard the roar of breakers, at first dull and distant; then nearer and louder. Here the forest was merely singed, not burnt up: and presently we passed the limits of devastation and entered a green alley cut through the undergrowth, and walled in with most luxuriant vegetation, plants, trees, and creepers, wholly unknown in the ordinary forests of the country. Nothing could be more striking and beautiful than this sudden contrast of exuberant vegetable life to the bare, lifeless forest through which we had been toiling the last two days. Never did moss or lichen before appear so exquisitely perfect in form and tint. The fern-tree spread out its green feathery fronds, contrasted with the "ebon shades" beneath and beyond. A delicate tendril grass climbed up into the trees, and hung from branch to branch. Such *had been* the whole route through the forest previous to the fires! As we trotted on, our haggard horses caught at reeds and ferns, freshened by the sight of anything green, and seeming to understand that grass was now at hand.

After five miles of these beautiful shrubberies, with huge gums and stringybark trees shooting up out of them three hundred feet over our heads, we descended to the beach by the last glimmer of twilight. Old ocean welcomed us with his roar. A little stream was distinguish-

able wending its way along the beach to the sea. A light on the coast a mile distant showed the spot where the "Margaret" lay stranded. Thirsty, weary, and footsore, we rushed to the river, and, though close to the sea, found it pure and sweet, more grateful than Falstaff's sack, or Soyer's Nectar. Camped on a little open platform, by a shrubbery of blue gums.

Monday 24th, at daylight, opened our eyes on Apollo Bay, sixteen miles from Cape Otway. A bold rocky coast, densely forested hills, reaching down to within a mile of the sea,—a heavy surf thundering in upon a broad sandy beach,—a glassy stream running parallel to the line of breakers,—such are the outlines of the scene, wild and desolate, yet not without beauty, and abounding with interest to the botanist and geologist.

Here we remained two days, exploring the coast and neighbourhood. The first thing that strikes you is the great beauty, variety, and novel character of the vegetation. The *blue gum* (a beautiful shrub when young) is abundant. Scattering the aromatic fragrance of its leaves and crushed seeds, it reminds you of Milton's charming lines,

> "Now gentle gales,
> Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
> Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
> Those balmy spoils. As when to them who sail
> Beyond the Cape of Horn, and now are past
> Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
> Sabean odours from the spicy shore
> Of Araby the Blest; with such delay
> Well pleased, they slack their course, and many a league
> Cheer'd with the grateful smell, Old Ocean smiles."

In the thickets and undergrowth of the forest is an endless variety of flowering shrubs and plants. Everything indicates a humid climate, and vegetation puts on an almost tropical luxuriance. Besides the river there is a salt water inlet, abounding with fish and wild fowl: fish are also often washed up on the beach.

The carboniferous strata crop out along the beach and form rocky headlands, presenting a series very similar to that of Western Port and Cape Patterson, but with fewer traces of igneous action. In both we have a thick bed of red and grey sandstone, overlying a succession of shales, sandstones, and conglomerates, honeycombed and roughened by the action of wind, water, and spray. There are numerous thin seams and bunches of a friable black shale, which has frequently been mistaken for coal, and more than once shipped off for Geelong as such. The difference between the two, however, is obvious enough to any but the most unpractised eye. About a mile south of the reef that shuts in the Bay we found a seam of a jet coal, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, clean and light, of conchoidal fracture, and of excellent quality, very similar to the thickest and best of the seams at Cape Patterson. This is the only seam of true coal that I noticed on the Cape Otway coast; and of the reiterated attempts to discover a workable seam on this coast, not one has been undertaken in its neighbourhood. In the mass of the sandstone rock are numerous large balls or spherical concretions of soft friable sandstone in concentric coats, formed, perhaps, by aggregation round a nucleus, like flints. The combined action of the sea, the winds, and the river, has formed a cultivable tract about a mile wide, at the foot of the

forested hills. This is separated from the beach by swelling sand hummocks. The soil of these flats is very light and sandy, and black from the admixture of particles of charcoal. The soil of the forest appears poor but deep, which may partly account for the giant growth of the trees.

We did not attempt to reach the Cape, the fires having, we were told, rendered the road almost impracticable. For the first two miles the track lay through thick shrubberies and underwood, and these were succeeded by the limitless burnt-up forest and scrub.

There were no fixed residents at Apollo Bay at this time. A party of men were repairing the "Margaret" cutter, lying on the beach. A gang of splitters had also just arrived with their wives. Our guide had been living here for a twelvemonth, when he was burnt out by the fires of Thursday, and everything he had, destroyed. On the beach was a stack of timber ready for shipment, which had escaped the flames.

February 26th.—(To Addis Bay, 14 miles.) Left camp at half-past seven, and turned homewards. C. had now joined our party. The route lay along the coast. Sometimes we were trotting along the sands, sometimes scrambling over the rocks, and sometimes climbing up the steep shaggy sides of the headlands, that, jutting out into the sea, denied all passage round them. The hills are covered with burnt timber and scrub. Occasionally a single shrub, hanging over a cliff or gully, had escaped. The coal strata continue along the coast, forming bluffs and rocky platforms, scooped and fissured by the waves, and sometimes honey-combed like the tracery of Saracenic windows.

South of Cape Patton there is a deep and lofty cave in the cliffs. Near Addis Bay the sandstone abounds with hard siliceous *balls*. Where the spray has eaten away the softer rock, these balls protrude from the cliffs like huge eggs, growing out of each other.

We crossed three or four streams of fresh water, running on rocky beds. The first of these had that black inky look often seen in mountain brooks: and being uncommon in this country, the stream might be called the "Blackwater." The sea view from the summit of Cape Patton is magnificent, embracing the whole coast-line of the two bays which it separates.

Addis Bay is smaller than Apollo Bay. Like that it forms the *embouchure* of a main valley, and has its running stream and its little sandy flat at the base of the hills. These are still covered with the blackened skeletons of trees. Here, Mr. Fisher, one of the most enterprising of those who have attempted to establish a timber trade on this coast, was residing previous to the fatal 6th of February, when he witnessed the utter destruction of his house, garden, fences, everything, narrowly escaping with his life. Not a soul was living here now; but C., who was on the spot at the time of the fires, described the scene. Having, on the morning of Black Thursday, observed that the forest was on fire in the distance, they took the precaution of burning a girdle of timber around the Bay. In the afternoon, the wind shifting, three fires united their flames, and came down on the settlers with resistless fury, annihilating everything in their way. Mr. Fisher, C., and another, fled to the sea, and stood up to their shoulders in the surf near a reef of rock, for three hours.

The flames, though coming, as he states, from the forest three quarters of a mile distant, scorched them as they stood in the water, and drove on far out to sea! We saw a horse that had had whiskers and eyebrows burnt off, yet escaped. Clouds of charcoal-dust and darkness added to the horrors of this memorable day. All this had happened less than three weeks ago, yet nature was already renewing her carpet of verdure; the young grass peeping up wherever the sand was mixed with a patch of charcoal dust.

Near Addis Bay are some "workings in search of coal," lately undertaken by an ignorant man, under the auspices and at the expense of the Melbourne Committee for Preliminary Operations in search of coal, and certainly never was public money more grossly squandered. Eight men were at work for two or three months, and here were the chief results of their labours — two pits, one about 5 feet 6 square and 10 feet deep; the other 5 feet square, and perhaps 20 feet deep! The first might have been dug by a single workman in a day. Water stood at the bottom of the second, and seemed to have put an end to what ought never to have been begun. Both the sites chosen for these "coal-workings" and the mode of carrying them out betray equal ignorance. Such blundering and waste of public money, very common in the Colonies, suggests that, in Victoria at least, Sheridan's saying that "Corporations have neither bodies to be kicked, nor souls to be damned," admits of wider application than he intended.

February 27th. — To Loutit Bay, twenty-five miles. For the first eight miles, generally on a rough rocky beach. Whilst taking a leap among sharp rocks, every horse was

more or less cut. In England, such places would be pronounced *impracticable*, but this is a word which must here be expunged from your travelling vocabulary. At the eight-mile creek we halted for breakfast. Near this spot, a greenstone dyke breaks through the coal measures, and juts out into the sea. From hence are conspicuous "The Twins," a pair of conical hills, and near them Mount St. George *, forming the outwork of the promontory between Loutit and Addis Bays, and one of the most remarkable objects on this coast.

The track, which had only recently been opened, now led inland through the forest; but it soon became evident that it would be difficult or impossible to follow it; the fires had destroyed every trace of its direction. We began by climbing a precipice of a hill—a sort of steep staircase with the steps left out,—the earth crumbling away under the tread; and stones, loosened by the leading horse, rolling and pitching headlong down on those below: one of our beasts, an elephantine pack-horse, plunged, fell, and had well nigh rolled down into the sea; but luckily the packs fell off, and he recovered his footing. We then carried the packs to the summit of the hill, which is a rival in difficulty, though inferior in fame, to a celebrated mule-track on the mountain shores of the Gulf of Lepanto, known emphatically as the "*Kaka Scala*," or "The Bad Staircase." At length we gained the crest of the sombre forest range, and were rewarded with a glorious sea-view; the deep blue of the ocean filled up the interstices of the

* Another mountain, near Cape Patton, bears this name in the Government Charts. I have followed the local nomenclature, as that which must eventually prevail.

network of stems and branches, and melted into the softer azure of the summer sky. These sudden and fitful contrasts and vicissitudes constitute one chief element of the pleasure of travel. They are the lights and shadows of the traveller's life. Such unlooked for glimpses of transcendent beauty, in the midst of rude and rugged scenes, and won by toil, are enjoyed with keener relish, and leave a more ineffaceable impress on the memory, than whole days of continuous sunshine and uncontrasted beauty: as sudden smiles have sometimes a strange sweetness on a countenance habitually severe or sad.

Several hours were now spent in alternately losing and recovering the track. At 4 P. M., we found ourselves on a lofty crest, at the edge of a steep wooded valley, and here again were rewarded with one of those enchanting scenes which for the while make you forget everything else, and "lend to loneliness delight." The deep winding gully opened down upon the coast, and let in a view of the blue ocean. At the mouth of the valley rose conspicuous the conical "Twins," breaking the sea line. On its opposite side lofty beetling crags reared themselves out of the umbrageous mass below. The conical form of the Twins, so rare in this country, recalls many a scene in the Apennines, and the whole picture might be taken for a mountain pass in Italy.

We now determined to give up all further attempts to follow or find the track, and to steer direct through the forest by compass. The effect of the fires was curiously different here from what it was in the inland ranges. In the latter, the trees were far larger, and oftener hollow, and the fires appear to have raged more fiercely; so that

huge fallen logs, trunks, and branches were matted into an impassable labyrinth. In the coast ranges, on the contrary, few trees had fallen; but the undergrowth had been totally annihilated; so that the forest was now pervious in all directions,—above you, burnt trunks and stems,—beneath, blackened earth without one blade of grass. The only vegetation was a microscopic fungus, blood-red. Bird, beast, and reptile appear to have alike perished.* Occasionally we lighted on the carcase of some one of the smaller animals. The smoke would, doubtless, have suffocated them had they escaped the flames.

We traversed the valley, followed a long sharp ridge, and descended into another deep delving valley, the horses sliding rather than walking down its crumbling sides: we were of course on foot. In the deep solitudes of this rugged valley, where, probably, no white man had ever before trod, we found a picturesque little streamlet, over-arched with trees, gurgling on over its rocky bed towards the sea. We then crossed another steep range, and found another brook beyond it;—crossed a third ridge, and came down to a third stream. Here, overtaken by night, we were compelled to camp; and our jaded beasts again to fast: for to make way through the forest with its innumerable stumps by night was impossible. A huge fire, salt beef, bacon and biscuit, duly followed,—then the outstretched tent, the saddle-pillow, the all-enveloping opossum rug, and sleep such as only the weary know; such as sumptuous couches and beds of eider down cannot yield

* Millions of animals are said to be sometimes destroyed by casual conflagrations on the Pampas of South America.

to your soft and silken voluptuary. C. had left us half an hour previously, hoping to make his way out of the forest before nightfall, but was overtaken by darkness. We saw his camp fire on the opposite hill side, but he was unable to return to us through the pitchy darkness of the forest, and so lay down, solitary, supperless, and, worst of all, without water.

February 28th.—Rose by starlight—started at 6—crossed the brook, where it was traversed by a greenstone dyke—up the opposite steep—crossed another gully, and finally descended to the beach at Loutit Bay, reaching it about 8 A. M. Found we had gone too far inland. After bathing in the creek on the beach, breakfasted in a thicket, feasting on extempore-made "*leather-jackets*," *i.e.*, flour and water cakes, thrown on the embers and baked *à la naturelle.* Some wandering bullocks and the crowing of cocks showed that we had returned to the haunts of man.

Loutit Bay resembles Apollo Bay, but though apparently more sheltered it is said to be less safe. Both are hemmed in by dense forest ranges and rocky headlands. Apollo Bay has the advantage of good timber close at hand for shipping; at Loutit Bay it must be carted five miles. A year ago eighty men were located here, splitting and sawing; but the hope of establishing an extensive trade was suddenly extinguished by the two coasting craft then on the station going on shore in one day. Since then, a single family has continued here, and have now a large contract for supplying posts and rails to a wealthy landholder. A party of ship-builders from Melbourne is just arrived. The brook that comes down from the mountains,

before debouching on the sands, runs over a rocky bed through a pretty wooded dell, (unlike the monotonous troughs or *nullahs* of the Barwon, Weribee, &c.,) and the leaves of the gum-trees, being scorched and sere from the fire, gave to the whole quite an European autumnal air. Passed a pleasant morning in these primeval groves.

> " Here the rude axe, with heavy stroke,
> Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
> Or fright them from their hallowed haunt."

We started at 3 P.M., along the beach, northward and homeward. We had now but one more steep spur to traverse, which has received the poetic name of the "*Big Hill.*" Its summit was clad with iron-bark trees. Crossed another creek at its base, — then along the beach, generally sandy, sometimes rocky, to *Carter's Station.* Four miles before reaching it, examined two or three large seams of shale and lignite, dipping to the south-east, visible at a distance of some miles, like black bands drawn along the sandy shore. These are well worth a visit: the lignite exhibits the woody fibre perfectly preserved. Carter's Station is on a swampy flat, opening upon the sea, and separated from it by sand dunes. Here suddenly terminate the coal strata. The Otway ranges bear away inland, and are succeeded by a new rock, and a totally different vegetation on the coast. A hard, red siliceous sandstone, underlying the coal measures, forms a bold headland, with a detached outlier; and scant herbage succeeds the dense timber of the Otway Forest.

Poor Carter was one of the many sufferers from the

fires: his hut and stacks were all destroyed. From hence to Loutit Bay is about twelve miles—to Geelong thirty-four. Camped in a jungle of reeds.

February 29th.—Up by starlight and walked to the top of the sea-cliffs at dawn, and enjoyed the sight of the morning breaking upon this silent, savage, solitary coast. To the south lay a long stretch of sandy shore, and white breakers, shut in by the "Big Hill." Beyond towered Mount St. George; and still more distant Cape Patton, between Addis and Apollo Bays. To the north stretched another long line of coast and headlands. Massive, richly tinctured clouds hung over the eastern horizon, catching radiance from the sun, which was still beneath the sky line of the ocean.

Once more *en route* for Geelong; and now, as Byron says, "Being out of the mountains, my journal must be as flat as my journey," though here we had not to complain of many "tokens of insipid civilisation." The first eight miles the track continues near the beach: soil barren and sandy, with grass-trees. We then descended to a creek, draining an open valley. Here, as elsewhere in any break on the coast ranges, the land falls away inland, having been raised and banked up by drifting sand along the beach. At this point commenced a new range of cliffs of red and yellow clays, which, falling away in large slices, leave yawning chasms and high beetling bluffs. The road now turns inland. A few miles further, the coarse red sandstone again crops out. At 16th mile, reached Tate's Station. Here we were once more in the ordinary Australian forest; gum-trees, with feathery pendulous foliage, banksias, &c., sprinkled

over a monotonous rolling country, with scant herbage, strewed with old bark. No water to be found, except in a foul and filthy hole: so we were obliged to push on our jaded beasts to Thomson's station within ten miles of Geelong. A little beyond this an outcrop of rock showed we were once more upon the volcanic country, upon one of those wide-spread sheets of lava, which, poured forth probably on the floor of the ancient ocean, now form such a large portion of the country, and give to it its peculiar pastoral capabilities. Reached Geelong, jaded, footsore, and travel-torn, after having "bushed it" in the open air eight nights, and having been for ten days surrounded by the devastation caused by the terrible fiery tornado of the 6th of February. Thus ended our pilgrimage to the Forest of Cape Otway, during which, though lasting but ten days, we had gone through more toil, and encountered far more difficulties, than would be required in making the modern "Grand Tour," including Constantinople, Cairo, and the Pyramids.

It has been mentioned that there are numerous streams in this district, fed from the clouds that cluster round the summits of the mountains. As many of these were running with a brisk current in February, after a summer remarkable for heat and drought, we may conclude that they would, during a great part of the year, furnish a considerable amount of water power. It was the existence of such power in Lancashire and Gloucestershire, that first caused those districts to become the great seats of English manufactures; and when, after steam had to a great extent superseded water, it was found that the same localities contained vast supplies of coal, they were enabled

still to preserve the preeminence they had won. These considerations, in conjunction with the fact that the Otway Promontory contains within it similar resources — water and fuel — (the main elements of mechanical power), are highly suggestive. They seem to point to a period when these savage wilds shall become great manufacturing districts; when valleys that never yet heard stroke of axe shall be peopled with busy hives of artisans, and seats of the commercial enterprise of the future Arkwrights of Australia.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRAVELLING IN THE BUSH — *continued.*

A Western Port Station — Australian Pyrenees — Through the Forest — Sheepshearer's Hut — Natives — The Bunyip — A Home on the Plains — Cruelty and kindness of the Natives.

THE following extract from a letter refers to the Western Port district, east of Melbourne. The date is 1850. But it must not be taken as a picture of squatter life throughout Victoria at that period. This district, being more wet and more wooded than the colony generally, is less adapted for pastoral pursuits, and the stations are less valuable in proportion. The wealthier squatters of the central and western districts* have made much further advances in the domestic comfort of their homes, and in all the refinements of European life, as will be manifest from a subsequent extract. What now follows may be regarded rather as a sample of average Bush life in Victoria ten years earlier, or three or four years after the founding of the colony:—

* The name "Western Port" may mislead the reader — as it is, in fact, the *south-eastern* part of the old colony of Port Philip.

. . . . You are familiar with the word "Bush." Do you give it any definite meaning?

"The Bush," when the word is used in the towns, means all the uninclosed and uncultivated country; and nearly the whole colony being in this state, it includes nearly all,—heath, grassy plains, thick forest, open Windsor-like forest, and dense scrub and jungle; the latter sometimes forming an impenetrable network of trees and shrubs and interwoven creepers, through which you must *cut* your way. When in the country, "the Bush" means more especially the forest. The word itself has been borrowed from the Cape, and is of Dutch origin. I have not forgotten your horror of Australian life. Your fancy, however, cannot have outdone the truth in picturing the rough, coarse, and subsavage mode of existence common in the district I have just been visiting. I believe, however, I have seen one of the worst samples of Bush life. You used to talk of the hugger-mugger, servant-of-all-work, two-pronged-fork kind of life that certain people led. My dear J., such a way of living is refined, nay, is sumptuous, compared with the squatter's rough life in the Bush. I often thought that, spite of all the talk of the poverty of the poor in England, many an English labouring man would scorn to live as gentlemen contentedly live here.

A "Station" consists of the master's hut, his servant's, the stock-yard, paddock, &c. The hut commonly consists of two, perhaps three, small rooms. The whole would go comfortably into your drawing-room, and not a tight fit. The floor is plaster or mud; walls, of plank, or "wattle and dab,"—a kind of hurdle-work, rough-plastered with mud;

roof, of bark or shingling; ceiling, none. Partitions go up to the level of top walls, so that, all being open above, what is spoken in one room is audible throughout. When it rains, rain pours in under door, floor becomes muddy, and you find your chair burying its legs in the ground. I say chair, but don't think you are always so lucky as to get a chair. What there may be are entirely of wood. At one end of the room is a huge recess for the wood fire. Smoke passes up through a wooden or peat chimney. A gun is slung up to the wall. There are also, perhaps, a score of bushy tails of the "native dog," something between a wolf and a fox, over the chimney. A few greasy old volumes may lie in one corner. There is a small window, with white calico stretched over it instead of glass. On each side of the fire is a wooden couch, which serves, when needed, as a bed. In the bedroom are one or two "stretchers," *i. e.* bedsteads that fold up like camp-stools, with canvass tops, on which you sleep. There is a tin pot and a tin basin; a dirty towel hangs up near, and an old worn-out toothbrush is stuck under the bark or shingle roof; a dirty comb completes the toilette,—perhaps, also, stuck under the roof.

There are no drawers, no cupboard, no shelves. What can you do, then, with anything? Why, stick it up under the *roof*. The squatters are, however, very hospitable, and freely give the stranger the best they have. This is fortunate; for in many parts there are no inns, and you are wholly dependent on the hospitality of strangers. Thus, during the month I was absent from Melbourne, I only slept once in an inn, the only one in the district. I will try and give you some idea of the

manner of proceeding on arriving at a station. It is the last day before I return to Melbourne. The sun has been down half an hour. I ride up to the huts; a troop of dogs rush out and bark. This awakes up the colony; the master opens his hut-door and comes forth. I dismount, and ask if he could kindly give me shelter for the night; whereupon, he says he shall be happy to give me of his best, though that is but rough. My man takes away the horses, and we enter the hut. Host has a jovial red face, and is habited in the coarse blue shirt common in the Bush. He has been seated with another, roughly clad, at a small wooden table, playing at cards. Tea is on the table,—a coarse green tea, in universal use as the cheapest,—in a huge tin pot. Stale bread and cold meat (no butter) complete the repast. There is no milk, "because this is a sheep station;" and though he has, perhaps, thousands of acres of pasturage, he does not think it worth the trouble to keep a cow for his own use. Well, tea is over, and talk ensues; and now it is proper for me to tell my business in travelling this way, and I mention my name, if I have not already done so; but this ought to be done when first accosting the host. At 9 o'clock host retires to bed, in the inner room. While talking afterwards to the other guest I discovered that he was no other than the son of the Reverend —— of Surrey. A few old broken vials on a shelf had already made me guess that he was a surgeon. I occupy one couch in sitting-room and the other guest occupies the other. Being a stranger, *they give me a pair of sheets.* Once, however, I had to sleep in the blankets, for there were no sheets on the station. The fire (and you always have a

fire in the Bush) continues smouldering during the night. The door is only secured by a rude latch; or it may be left open. One step across the threshold and you are in the wild Bush. Above shine the heavenly host in their silence and their beauty. The night passes in profound stillness, but at earliest dawn the cheerful "laugh" of the "laughing jackasses" is heard in the neighbouring groves. The laughing jackass, you must know, is a happy bird, and is probably the only jackass that ever does laugh. Well, morning comes. The blackbird sings cheerfully in the forest. I get up first; go into inner room. Host is fast asleep. I wash in his tin basin, there being no other. By the time I have done, host awakes and begins to get up. I apologise for the liberty, &c., and offer to throw away the dirty water. Host stops me, and, taking basin out of my hand, *throws water on mud floor*, observing, that this *is their method of killing the fleas!!!* As host sleeps in his blue day-shirt, and washes very cursorily, he is presently dressed, and goes to look after his sheep, which have been folded near the hut during the night. Breakfast presently follows,—in the style of last night's supper; and breakfast over, I am again in the saddle, with heavy saddle-bags and great coat rolled up on the pummel.

The following extracts are from Notes of a Tour in the Australian Pyrenees, in November, 1850:—

November 23.—After breakfast started with H. in his dog-cart and tandem to Burn Bank and Cooper and Thomson's Station. On reaching Burn Bank took

"Major Mitchell's Line"* through the forest at the foot of Mount Cole, the most remarkable of the Pyrenean chain. Rain came on. Lunched *al fresco:* the horses' fore-feet were secured with the reins, and they were allowed to graze. On nearing Mount Cole we left "the Major's Line" to the right, grass-grown, but still distinctly traceable, and made a long sweep to avoid the creek and thick forest at the base of the mount. Left the forest and mount to the north, and now jolted roughly over an open lava plain, furrowed by "Dead Men's Graves." Held on, to avoid being bumped out of the dog-cart. Reached the station at sunset. C. was fresh from his woolshed, where they were shearing; his dress bore marks of dirty work. The squatters usually are the active and energetic directors of their own establishments, and hence their success. The new, spacious, and well-built woolshed of split-wood or *slabs,* contrasts with the picturesque ruggedness of the old tumble-down building of bark which it supersedes, hastily erected in the earlier days of the colony. Every station now has its recent improvements,— a woolshed (or shearing-house), a sheep-wash, or a new house for the owner.

Scenes in the Forest.— On every side a labyrinth of gum-trees, with silvery and mottled trunks and feathery foliage, which offers no shade from the burning sun. Here and there huge patriarchs of the forest, with gnarled and twisted trunks and branches, in grotesque con-

* The track made by Major (now Sir Thomas) Mitchell's exploring party, when this part of the country was first visited by white men.

tortions. Gigantic trees, with the heart and half the lower part of the trunk burnt away by bush-fires, yet retaining their foliage green and flourishing. Dead trees and branches lie half hid in the high grass. The luxuriant green of the massy foliage of the cherry-tree and the oak contrasts with the meagre and sombre foliage of the gum. Sometimes charred and dead trunks stretch right across your road, and you must wind round them. Now and then you come upon a beautiful green glade, with a limpid creek stealing through its grassy banks. The deep hazy purple of the distant mountains gleams through the green branches. For music, there is the harsh hooting of the cockatoo and parrot, the monotonous clear note of the bell-bird near the creeks, and, more rarely, a melodious trill which reminds you of the songsters of our own sweet woodlands.

Sunday, November 24.—At Challicum. There is now an encampment of the "mi-mis" of the Aborigines at this station. The *mi-mi* is a booth or tent, made of loose boughs, open in front, opposite the family fire, which is close outside. The men are absent, but have left their *loubras* (women) to demoralise the whitemen employed on the station, who feed them well, and receive their recompense. The natives will sell their wives for a night for a piece of tobacco. Being Sunday, the shearers were lying asleep in the hut, or lazily loitering about. One told me he had not been in a church for fourteen years. They had no Bibles: would be glad to have some, they said. I asked if they ever read. One replied, "Yes; I have just been reading about Parr's Life Pills." Read a chapter to them: attentive listeners.

November 25.—With T. I visited the *mi-mis* of the natives, and talked to the *loubras* about the traditions of the *Bunyip*, an apocryphal monster said to have existed once on a time in a neighbouring water-hole. It happened, they said, "a long time ago," repeating the English words with a peculiar musical cadence. They had no chronology more exact than this. Near the *mi-mi* camp was a flag-staff, bound round with red cloth: at the summit were two small rods with streamers attached, and on the top of the pole a bunch of feathers, indicating the authority of their Queen, now on the Hopkins River. The women were almost naked, very dirty, and quite indifferent to it. They tie a red band round their black hair. Some wear necklaces. One had a large hole pierced through the cartilage of the nose to receive an ornament. One young woman had a half-caste child slung behind her in an opossum-rug, and when it cried she dragged it round to her breast. The *dolce far niente* seems the height of their bliss, as they lie stretched under the shadow of their *mi-mis*. Occasionally they begin to chant, in a low murmur, a national air, beating their stretched opossum-rugs as a drum accompaniment. They have no musical instruments.

After breakfast we drove to three large water-holes, where, according to native tradition, the Bunyip was taken and speared; as it lay dead on the grass its outline was marked out, and the turf within the outline afterwards removed. The shape of the cutting, now indistinct, is that of a bird, not a reptile (see *fig.* 2.). I sketched and measured it. Bunyips are supposed by the natives still to exist in the deep water-holes of the creeks.

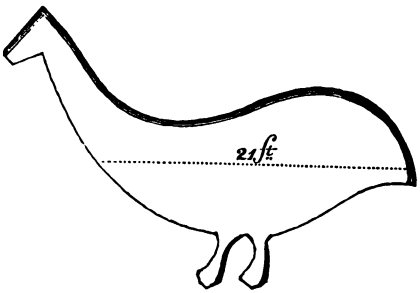


Fig. 2. The Bunyip.

Went on to A. T. T.'s Station, six miles. Here found a comfortable, well-furnished house, overlooking a large pool or water-hole, skirted with grotesque old gum-trees. The red volcanic soil makes an excellent garden; the light porous lava from which it is formed disintegrates under exposure to the air, it is said, in two years. Hot wind again to-day, heralded, as usual, by the white *mare's-tail* clouds, proving, by their reflex curl, the existence of different currents in various strata of the air.

How different are the stations in these parts from those at Western Port! *Here*, are comfort, luxury, and even elegance; *there*, poverty, rudest fare, — mutton, damper, and coarse hysonskin tea,—a mud floor, and no ceiling. All the squatters I have seen of late have been many years in the colony, have worked hard, and are now enjoying the fruits of their labours, only fearful that some new enactment may wrest their privileges or possessions from them. They are commonly active, intelligent, and well educated.

While at W.'s this morning, a man rode up (W. being

a magistrate) to say that a black boy, who had been living on his station sixteen miles off, had been decoyed away by a party of natives, under the pretence that the Hopkins River blacks were about to come and cut them all off. Having succeeded in getting the boy away with them, they struck him down with a blow on the head, cut open his side, and cut out his kidney fat! The poor lad was afterwards found, still alive, and was bandaged up! No legal proceedings can be taken against the murderers, because depositions by the natives are not admissible before the tribunals.

This horrible deed was probably an act of vengeance for the murder of one of their own people by a man of the tribe to which the boy belonged. The slaughter of a vicarious victim is quite common among the Aborigines. They regard it as a solemn duty to the manes of a murdered man to execute vengeance on some individual of the tribe guilty of and responsible for the murder: so that their feuds are interminable. Before many years, however, both the natives and their feuds will be extinct and forgotten. They are rapidly melting away. The cutting out of the kidney fat while the victim is alive is an atrocity of common occurrence, and apparently sanctioned by superstitious feeling.

The following story of their kindness to their dead shows in strong contrast to the above barbarity to the unoffending living, and, amongst ten thousand other facts, proves that the most depraved and darkened human souls are still not utterly dark, but still retain some of the gentler feelings of our common humanity. — A black died at W.'s place, and was buried by his comrades in a

swampy spot, hard by. Some time afterwards, in the rainy season, they came back to W. and said they must remove the body, giving the following reason: — "Too much wet and miserable, Mr. Wright. Too much cold." Accordingly, they disinterred the body, placed it in a large hollow tree, some feet above the ground, and then carefully stopped up the hole with boughs and logs. We visited the spot, and saw the living tomb of the dead black, whose memory seemed still so carefully cherished by his tribe. This seems sufficiently to prove that they do not regard death as annihilation.

CHAPTER IX.

TRAVELLING IN THE BUSH—*continued.*

A rich Squatter's Hut—Start for the Grampians — Ascent of Mountain Pass — Wood splitters — Great Lava Plain — Granite Tors—The Hopkins River — Oasis in the burnt-up plain — Intense heat —Hut on fire — Start for Black's Station — Night Bivouac in the rocky wilds — Horses lost — Head Station — Pools on summits of volcanic hills — Salt springs in the Plains. — From Mac Ivor Diggings to Bendigo — Frozen Creek — Forest — Iron-bark tree indicative of Gold — Emerge on the Bendigo Valley — Lava plain in the rainy season — Travelling incidents — Bivouac on the banks of the Campaspe — Dangerous ford — Australian ferry — Drays floated over.

The following travelling notes are from a Journal of a tour through the district of the Grampians, and the vast volcanic plains to the south of that chain, — a region admirably adapted for the pursuits of sheep-farming, and now meted out amongst a number of opulent squatters, many of whom have created comfortable, and even elegant, homes for themselves in the wilderness, with well-furnished houses, and pleasant gardens stocked with fruit and vegetables.

December 4. — Reached W.'s, near the foot of the Grampians. W. has been building a large brick house these two years, and meanwhile lives in a wretched slab hut. On entering it, a piano (not yet unpacked) told the presence of ladies; a great rocking-horse that of children.

W. himself is an enthusiast in mesmerism, and tries it every night on a rheumatic servant, bent down with disease; hitherto unsuccessful,—certainly not from want of faith in the operator, who was in a state of high excitement,—indeed, much more affected by the process than the patient, who seemed quiet, stolid, and unmoved under the mystic passes. This was the eighth night, and W. devotes one hour a night to it. The room I slept in was, like the rest of the house, formed of rough slabs covered with matting. The canvass was hanging forlornly from the ceiling. Windows were of calico instead of glass. It seemed to be a store-room, and contained sacks, bales, boilers, boxes, &c. I was kept awake half the night by the antics of a whole menagerie of pets. The front door was open, and a pet lamb was running in and out, pawing and scraping close to my head. Cats were promenading about the joists and bark roof, and capering upon my bed. Geese and poultry were scratching and fidgetting outside the hut; and, at early dawn, the hoarse crowing of a cock was the signal for a general chorus from all parts of the homestead. The proprietor of this humble hut is a wealthy squatter and owner of 25,000 sheep, worth probably 20,000*l.* He had many tales of his conflicts with the blacks in earlier days.

December 5.—Started for the Grampians, eight or ten miles distant. Heat so oppressive that I stopped some hours during the mid-day at C.'s station: found the house empty and silent. In the afternoon again off for the mountains. We struck a wood-splitter's track, and followed it up the mountain-pass. First, a gentle rise through gum forest and scrub, then ascended a very steep

rocky gully. Near the summit of the chain are lofty precipices of white quartzose rock, deeply furrowed vertically. The mountains are covered with dense forest, which sometimes runs up to the very top. At the crest of the gully, a glorious view of mountain-peaks, umbrageous forest, and outstretched plain below. Here you see how narrow and *saw-like* are the ridges of the spurs. Another short ascent through stringy-bark forest leads to the highest point of the pass. The road, white as snow from the white quartz sand which covers it, winds through a rich green undergrowth. Descended by a gentle slope, and came presently to a spring. L. told me that there is another at the summit of the mountain. Granite crops out here and there near the head of the pass, forming, apparently, the axis of the chain. The sun went down, and we continued our descent six miles by starlight to Churnside's Station, where L., the superintendant, whom I had casually met in the morning, was expecting us, and gave me a hospitable welcome. It was half-past eight when we arrived, and men and horses were tired out with the mountain scramble. There are saw-pits on the summit of the pass, and woodmen's tracks pierce the thick forest in all directions. The best timber is always found on the ranges, and they carry it hence thirty and forty miles. The sawyers work by contract, and the purchaser carries the timber by his own teams. Thus the wood-splitter opens up roads through the mountains, and becomes the pioneer of transit. There is great art in selecting trees for the axe. The exterior often looks sound and healthy while the heart is gone. When some of the top branches are dead, they know that the trunk is decayed within.

December 6.— Started at 7 for Black's Station. Made for top of a slaty range that here points down south, and loses itself in the great lava plain. A summit on this range is called "Good Morning Bill Hill," from a black thus named who was killed here. Further north is the pyramidal Mount Ararat, the highest of the range. Six miles further we came to the "Rocky Ranges," — low hills crested by huge granite rocks, grown over with lichens, and of most grotesque and bizarre forms and disposition,—globose, conical, and shapeless, forming a sort of "Cheese Ring." Two miles further S. S. E., another granite hill rises out of the plain. Throughout the colony, granite never appears to be very far from the surface, often cropping out in small patches through rocks of very different kinds and ages. Before reaching the Rocky Ranges, we crossed the Hopkins River dryshod. To the north-west extended the azure jagged chain of the Grampians: Mount Cole and the Pyrenees were visible to the north-east. Descending the ranges, we now traversed a wide stretch of monotonous lava plain, floored and furrowed with *Dead Men's Graves;* the grass already burnt up by the sun. The smoke of Bush fires— the dread of the squatter — was seen in the distance. Ten miles further, we reached T. T.'s Station, nestled in a hollow, beside a fine broad, deep water-hole, skirted with gnarled gum-trees, which, green and flourishing by the water's edge, contrast delightfully with the arid, dreary plain which encircles them, as the desert does the oasis. The sun was so hot to-day that the wax melted out of my riding-whip as it lay on the ground. While here, a hut caught fire, but was quickly extinguished.

The house is comfortable and well furnished, and has a pleasant garden overhanging the beautiful pool or water-hole, which forms part of Fiery Creek.

At 4.45 P. M. started for Black's Station to the south-east. Steered right across the plain for a bald hill which shuts out Mount Emu. It was a wild and dreary rolling country, with hollows forming swamps in winter, and further on became rocky. The sun went down: the brief twilight was rapidly waning, and our horses were knocked up; but no station or hut was visible: nothing but the drear, bleak plain. At last we came upon a track, followed it awhile, then left it, and again pursued our course. A thin crescent moon was setting. We wandered on, leading our jaded horses, ever stumbling over the rocks that on all sides peeped up above the surface. At length we were fairly lost in these rough, rocky, wildering wilds. It seemed hopeless to continue roaming on in darkness, without a clue to guide us on our way, so I halted. The wind blew cold and sharp. We were without water. Cold, hungry, and thirsty, I learnt that food, fire, and water are the real *necessaries* of life. Bartlem, my servant, a quondam convict, with something of the "gallows look," now made a fire, and a breakwind of boughs; and after eating a last fragment of an old *damper*, I was soon asleep on the ground, by the fire, under an overbowering banksia, wrapped in the warm folds of my opossum-rug. For a night bivouac, there is nothing comparable to the opossum-rug; and it is perhaps the only good thing the white man has borrowed from the black.

December 7. — Starting up at dawn, I found our horses were off! B. had tethered one to a tuft of grass,

and he had of course slipt his cable. The morning light showed that we were on a solitary moorland, with valley-like depressions, and here and there rough, rocky rises. A few stunted shrubs and deformed banksias consorted well with the craggy nooks out of which they grew. We had no track nor clue to guide us to a station; no living thing was in sight; and we had neither food nor water. B. and I started together to seek the lost horses, steering for the Portland Road, which we knew must be not far to the south. After walking a mile and a half, we came upon a flock and a hut. The dogs quickly espied us, and sounded the alarm; and the shepherd came out in his shirt. He told us we were a mile from Black's Station, and gave us a drink of cold water; and no trifling gift it was. We went on towards the station, and presently found our horses quietly grazing in a grassy bottom. Having succeeded in securing them, we returned to our camping place The sun now shone out, and promised another scorching day. Went on to Black's: found him still in bed. He got up, and I breakfasted with him. He has formed a good garden, by removing the large blocks of lava strewn on the surface (some of which required ten bullocks to move them), and then carting-in earth. He says he has (what are rare in this country) six springs of clear water on his run; and that the hills around him, which are all volcanic, have each a basin on the summit, without any outlet. This may probably account for the springs, which would then be merely the rain-water caught in the cups or craters on the hills, and then percolating through the crevices till it reached some vent at the surface. In the great lava plains and valleys salt springs

are not uncommon, and they appear often to exist also in the beds of those creeks which flow through the volcanic districts; for the water frequently becomes brackish in the water-holes during the summer heats, when the flow is much reduced or altogether ceases, and the water-holes, therefore, become stagnant. However unpromising this rocky country appears at first sight, there is, in fact, none throughout the colony better adapted for sheep. The rocks retain the moisture beneath them, and the soil is much richer than it is in those volcanic plains which, from their wavy surface, are known as "Bay of Biscay Land." Black told me that the grasses grow more abundantly from being pastured by sheep, but that many valuable kinds of herbs and weeds are being gradually destroyed. He has just sold his station for, I think, 20,000*l.*

The next extract refers to a journey from the Mac Ivor Diggings to Bendigo in the winter of 1853. The distance is only thirty six miles; but from the continued rains the country had become almost impassable, and we were nearly four days on the road. The track passes first along the green valley of the Mac Ivor Creek (which had been frozen over one night during this month of June), then traverses a forest, after which it emerges on one of the open lava plains, so common in this country, and crosses the River Campaspe, which, though easily fordable during the summer, was now a broad, rushing river. It then traverses a mixed country of forest, with grassy glades and open patches of pasturage, and next enters on the Ranges of the Bendigo gold district, wholly clothed

with thick forest, in which the hard, rugged, *iron-bark* tree is conspicuous. The summits of the ridges are mostly covered with white quartz gravel, and this, as well as the iron-bark, indicates that gold is not far off. At length one of the singular insulated White Hills of Bendigo appears, with white mounds of upturned earth on its crest and sides; and presently you emerge from the forest on the Great Valley of Bendigo, shut in on the opposite side by steep, forested hills and grassy escarpments, with its broad alluvial bottom burrowed by innumerable pits and shafts, and covered with the dug-up yellow earth. On the lower slopes, and in the valley-bottom, are a thousand snow-white tents, and here and there a line of waving flags marks the stores along the main line of traffic.

The following extract refers to our crossing the lava plain and the River Campaspe: —

They talk of Corduroy Roads in America, but I should like to show them a mile or two of this road. Imagine a stony plain, the surface entirely covered with large swampy holes filled with water, slush, and glutinous mud. Then throw into these hollows a number of angular blocks of stone, half-concealed by the muddy water, and you have a very faint conception of our road. Now one wheel is lifted high over one of these rocks, then plump it goes down into the hole. The trial was too severe for the wheels of my spring cart, and while plunging into one very deep hole two of the spokes snapped. After washing off the clotted mud from the spokes to discover the extent of the damage, we had then and there to unload the cart, heavily laden, all in the mud, and to splice the spokes; then to re-load one-half, convey it to the further

end of this dreadful bog, return again for the other half, and, finally, convey our ill-fated baggage, in three portions, down a steep hill to the brink of the swollen river — the Campaspe, or, as the carriers call it, the "Campacity." Here we pitched our tent, and camped for the night, close to the stream, and near some other tents whose owners were also waiting to cross the river. I was standing by our camp fire; my man, wet and weary, had gone to rest. The moon shone bright above. The camp was now silent and the diggers asleep. A horseman rode up and asked if it were possible to ford the river. I replied that I thought not. I had just been walking down along the banks to the ford, which was a quarter of a mile lower. There the full, rushing river foamed along, gleaming bright in the moonlight: a little island divided it into two streams.

The passage looked anything but inviting. I had, too, just before sunset, seen a cart driven over, and the horses could barely keep their footing, while the cart was nearly under water; and, had not the driver known the crossing well, all would have been submerged together. However, the new comer said he was on an important mission to counter-order some drays loaded with stores for the Mac Ivor Diggings, and very anxious to cross that night. I said that his employer could not expect him to peril his life. He replied, that "Mr. Brown was a *dreadful man.*" At length off he rode to examine the ford himself. After an interval, I heard him cantering up the opposite bank of the river. Then followed some talk with a party camped on the other side opposite to us; and, after another long interval, as I lay in bed, I heard his horses' hoofs clattering away, as he pursued his moonlight journey

through the Bush. Next day I found he had had to *swim* his horse over the river, the ford being impassable; and, having got well wetted (for in swimming the water goes clean over the saddle), he had halted by the first camp fire he met with to strip and dry himself. So that this "dreadful Mr. Brown," at any rate, gets his business zealously executed. So many lives have been lost in swimming horses over swollen rivers, that the old settlers will now never attempt it, unless impelled by urgent necessity.

Next morning beheld us and many others, horsemen, pedestrians, carriers with drays and long teams of bullocks, all anxious to cross the river. There were three ponderous drays, clotted with mud, and heavily laden with flour in sacks, and sugar in bags of matting, all coated with mud, showing that the drays, which had been some months on the road from Melbourne, had been more than once *bogged*, and the goods turned out in the mire. Neither flour nor sugar would be worth the carriage when it reached the mines. The only means for transporting both goods and men over the flooded river were a boat of moderate size and a square, leaky punt, the seams of which were open. But Australian diggers are not easily baffled. Some sailors who chanced to be in the crowd that had gathered round the ferry presently dragged the punt out of the water, turned her over, bottom up, examined and caulked the defective seams with a clasp knife and the materials of an old rope. The punt was soon ready for service, and loaded. There was but one man to work the ferry; so that of course all had to take care of themselves and their goods, and get them over as they could. This

was gradually accomplished amid some confusion and a vast deal of swearing, blasphemy, and rough jests. The river bank was steep, wet, slippery, and soon trodden into mire; and, as our baggage had to be first piled up on one side, then ferried over, piled up on the opposite margin of the stream, and finally carried up the bank, every article got well smeared with mud. But the cart and horse remain. How are they to get over? Thus: the horse is taken to the ford and swum over by the ferryman. The empty cart is drawn down to the water's edge; a large, empty cask is lashed to the inside; and the cart is then launched backward into the river, and, being buoyed up by the cask, is pulled over by means of a rope drawn by a man in the boat; and finally dragged up the opposite bank by half a score of hands tugging at the rope. Thus we cross unbridged rivers in Australia; and thus we battle down difficulties. What a stride between such a transit over a river and that of a railway train, flying through the aërial tubes of the Britannia Bridge!

CHAPTER X.

BUSHRANGERS.

Facilities for depredations — Habits of the Bushrangers — Their haunts — The Black Forest — "Sticking up"—Encounter with ruffians — Obtuse police — Van Diemen's Land desperadoes — Fourteen men tied up by two robbers — Their escape to Victoria — Extraordinary capture at Melbourne — Gold Escort Robbery — Capture of the robbers — Suicide of the approver.

If the Australian roads in winter may be well likened to those English roads of 200 years ago, out of which the king's coach had to be dug by the rustics, so may the Australian bushranger be regarded as the legitimate representative of the traditionary highwayman, who levied toll at Highgate, or stopped the post-boy and captured the mail-bags in Epping Forest. The real, living bushranger is, however, more of a ruffian and less of a hero than our ideal highwayman; for time, like distance, softens down the harsh and the coarse, and gives dignity to the ignoble.

Never, perhaps, did a country offer so tempting a field to the public robber as Victoria during the first year or two after the gold discovery. The interior was wild and uninhabited, abounding with lonely forests. Travellers were numerous, and mostly carried money or gold; for none were poor. The roadside public-houses were daily the scenes of drunken revelry. The police were few and

untrained: and the mixed and scattered population at the several diggings offered a ready asylum in case of pursuit. Add to all this that, separated from Victoria by a mere strait, was the depôt for the most accomplished villains of Great Britain, and it needed no prophet to foresee that the roads of the new gold country would very soon be swarming with thieves and desperadoes. Many of this class made their way to San Francisco from Sydney a few years earlier, and there the "Sydney men" soon became infamous and hateful; but a timely stop was put to their atrocities by the sharp, short work of Lynch law. It never came to this in Australia; though at one time matters looked very threatening at the mines; and I have myself seen a ruffian, who had just shot a man, being dragged along by an infuriate crowd, many of whom fiercely shouted "Hang him up!"

The bushranger has no fixed abode. His favourite resort is in the forest-roads leading to some newly-opened diggings. He has extensive acquaintance among the keepers of "sly grog-shops," and can always find covert and shelter in those rendezvous of vice and crime. Having by a series of outrages in one locality awakened the vigilance of the police, he cuts right across the country to some distant diggings, and is quickly lost in a crowd where all are ignorant even of the names of their next neighbours.

During the first year of the gold era they grew emboldened by success and impunity, and were not scrupulous in appearing in places of public resort. The practised eye of the digger readily distinguishes the dress, air, and behaviour of the regular bushranger. You might see

them, starting on a campaign, on the great roads leading out of Melbourne to the Mines. There are a pair of them, well-mounted, and wrapped up in great coats and *comforters;* they have a quiet, reserved air, and keep a little aloof from the main line of traffic. They always go armed with loaded revolvers; but these are kept concealed. They put up at night at the inns like other travellers, ordering supper and beds, and duly paying their bills in the morning. There is a well-known house called the "Bush Inn," on the road to Mount Alexander, and near the skirts of the lonely "Black Forest," which extends for miles over the ranges of Mount Macedon, about forty miles from Melbourne. They resorted in such numbers to this inn, that the ostler told me he knew a dozen of them, and could readily identify some of the most notorious. While at the inn they never committed violence, though they might, perhaps, quietly rob some of the drunken diggers that were usually hanging about the house, or sleeping under the verandah. I remember witnessing the consternation of one such on awaking and finding his gold-bag taken, and, a few yards off, picking up the top of the bag, which had been cut off and thrown away. The gloomy "Black Forest" has been the scene of many an outrage; and no place could be conceived more favourable to the marauder; for the country is mountainous and densely wooded; while close at hand are the solitary, forested wilds of Mount Macedon, whither the victim may be carried off and never heard of more till the day of doom.

The bushranger, however, does not always travel on horse. Some discovered a more easy-going mode of pro-

secuting their trade. In the dead of night they carry off a new spring-cart from the yard of a Melbourne tradesman. Next morning they start on their travels. Having selected a victim on the public road, they drive right across the path, seize the bridle, and present pistols.

In order to escape pursuit and capture, they frequently tie up those whom they have robbed to a neighbouring tree. There they must remain till liberated by some chance passer-by. Sometimes they barbarously beat those whom they have stopped and "stuck up," but who have nothing worth stealing about them. On the other hand, they will, if requested, sometimes give back a trinket or a few shillings to one who pleads poverty.

There is another and lower class of ruffians, who prowl about the outskirts of the towns and diggings on foot, singly or in pairs. I once encountered two of them at nightfall, near the Fryer's Creek Diggings, on a main road in the forest, and about a quarter of a mile from the tents of the diggers, in one of the principal gullies. I was on foot, alone, looking after two horses which I had lost that morning. Two men in blue serge shirts suddenly appeared on the road, walking towards me, and when within a few paces both presented pistols. One was a tall, powerful fellow, with a grave, sullen, and determined expression. He advanced with a pistol in each hand. The other was smaller, and evidently rather nervous at his work, as though it was new to him. He did the bidding of the first. When within a yard they paused, and told me to drop the riding-whip in my hand. The tall, scowling ruffian stood calmly with a pistol in each hand, pointed at and close to my head. The other

advanced, and having first felt to satisfy himself I had no concealed pistol, proceeded to rifle my pockets. The only object of value I had was a gold Geneva watch, an old companion of long travel by sea and land. The second robber seemed much flurried, certainly far more so than I, and was very anxious to be off. As I looked searchingly on the face of the taller man, he swore a deep convict oath that he would blow "my b——y brains out if I looked at him." However, they offered no violence nor other insult; and having replied to my question, whether they had seen the lost horses, the second robber hurriedly repeated "good night" three or four times, and both left the road and plunged into the depths of the forest.

It chanced that not long afterwards there was a horse-race at these diggings, and among the crowds there assembled I suddenly encountered the tall, sullen robber. Being anxious to track him to his lair, where I thought I might find my watch, I reported the case to the police on the ground, and begged the officer to set some one to watch the man. Soon after I was vexed to hear that they had lost sight of him in the crowd. However, I now went myself in quest among the thousands collected on the valley-flat and on the encircling rocky hills; nor was it long before I recognised the muscular frame and silent scowl of the robber, who was quietly seated on a grassy slope overlooking the course, with a companion whose countenance told plainly that he belonged to the same class of outcasts from society. Two policemen were now ordered to watch the man to his home. It will hardly be believed that, after a time, these astute constables *returned together* to their chief, to report that they

had watched their man till he had entered a certain tent which they could point out. A party was then despatched to the tent in question, entered, and found that the bird had flown.

It is no uncommon occurrence in the Australian colonies for a large number of shearers or others collected in a hut in the country to be "stuck up," that is, subdued and bound, by two or three determined bushrangers. Fifteen or sixteen strong active men may be thus treated, and have been frequently. At first one is ready to conclude either that they must have a private understanding with the robbers or else be the veriest poltroons. I thought so myself till I had an account of one of these affairs from a man who had been one of a large party thus "stuck up" by two very notorious bushrangers, the life and death of whom would furnish materials for a romance. Their names were Dalton and Kelly, and they will long be famous in the annals of daring and outrage in Van Diemen's Land. Dalton was a stout, powerful man, and about thirty years of age at the time of the *rencontre* I am about to describe. His accomplice, Kelly, was about twenty-three years old. They were both prisoners of the Crown in Van Diemen's Land. Dalton was transported at an early age, and had for a time been confined in the "Ocean Hell" of Norfolk Island, the gaol of the double-damned convict; but was afterwards taken back to Van Diemen's Land. From the same informant I learnt some particulars of their escape. They were confined in a penal establishment on a strait or an arm of the sea, wide enough, as it was thought, to preclude the possibility of flight. Dalton, Kelly, and five or six other prisoners,

however, weary of a wretched life, determined to risk that life for liberty; and having one day eluded the vigilance of their guards, attempted, though their legs were weighed down with fetters, to swim to the opposite shore. One after another their strength failed them; they sank and disappeared, till at length only Kelly and Dalton survived. Kelly's strength was rapidly waning, when Dalton called out to him, "Catch hold of me, Kelly! I can swim another hour yet." When at last they both got safe to land, Dalton exclaimed, "Well, thank God, I shall have *one* comrade at any rate."

They now quickly freed themselves from their irons, procured arms, and, knowing that they would certainly be hotly pursued, they at once started on a marauding expedition, visiting the neighbouring stations in succession, and pillaging each; intending, eventually, to make their way across Bass's Straits to Victoria. Dalton was a very formidable fellow; strong, active, and resolute, reckless of human life, and now rendered desperate by despair. He was, too, a first-rate marksman, and "could stick up a glass bottle." At least, so said my informant, who was at that time a free servant on one of the stations attacked by the bushrangers. What follows is in substance his account of what happened on that occasion, and may be taken as a sample of a class of outrages not very uncommon in Van Diemen's Land:—

"Kelly came up to the hut, which was full of men. I was standing at the door at the time, but did not know who the man was. When he came close, he asked if I had heard that the bushrangers were out. I answered, 'Yes, I had.' Then he pointed his gun at me, and said,

'I'm one of them. Go into the hut.' I went in; but, on turning round, I saw one of my mates standing against the hut in a corner, with another man standing over him, covering him with his gun. This other was Dalton, Kelly's mate. After I had gone into the hut, Kelly stood at the open doorway, with his gun pointed at those inside, swearing he would murder the first man who moved an inch. There were about fourteen men in the hut. Then he asked if there were any prisoners among them. One man said that he was. Kelly then ordered him to tie their arms together, one by one. While doing so, one man complained that he was being tied too tight; but this only drew forth another volley of oaths and threats from Kelly. When all were secured, Kelly went out to assist Dalton, who still stood over the man whom he had pinned to the wall of the hut, threatening to shoot him if he stirred. Kelly then tied up his hands, while Dalton continued covering him with his gun. He was then marched into the hut to join the others. And now Dalton began walking up and down the hut, haranguing his prisoners. He'd no doubt, he said, that some of them might be good and honest men, and some b——y scoundrels. That for his part he wouldn't hurt a hair of any good man's head, if he could help it. But he had been forced to take to this sort of life. It wasn't his fault. He had been *lagged* [transported] when only twelve years old: had since then over and over again tried to obtain his freedom by good conduct. But they wouldn't give it him, and it was useless to try any more by fair means. And he had now sworn to gain his freedom, or lose his life in the attempt. He didn't want to hurt any one.

What he wanted was money; and money he would have, come what, come might. He'd show them presently whether he was game or not. He'd go into the Master's house and bring out, single-handed, the man he wanted, no matter how many he might find there. But let them beware. If any man dared to move or tried to escape, he swore he'd scatter his brains about the yard, and blow the roof off his head."

Dalton now left the hut and went to the house of the settler their master, which was close at hand. All this time the household knew nothing of what had been passing in the hut. He entered, and went straight up to the sitting-room, where several gentlemen and ladies happened to be collected. He opened the door, and deliberately advanced with his gun pointed at those within. But a lady, who chanced to be behind the door, on seeing the levelled gun, slammed the door in the robber's face. This was a timely diversion, and the signal for a general scattering of those present.

The men in the hut were subsequently tried for collusion with the bushrangers. But when asked how they could suffer two men to "stick up" so many, one replied to the magistrate that, with their permission, he would himself "stick up" the whole Bench. The free servants were acquitted; those of the party who were prisoners of the Crown were sentenced to imprisonment; but, on government being petitioned by their free mates, who protested the innocence of all, they were liberated.

After this the two bushrangers boldly carried on their depredations, roaming about from station to station, *sticking up* the men and robbing the masters; while a large

party of the police were following on their track. One day they came to a hut full of men, and, opening the door, tried the old plan of intimidation by standing with loaded double-barreled piece in the doorway, and threatening with deep oaths to "drop" the first man of them who moved hand or foot. But it happened that several of the pursuing constables were within the hut. One of them, named Buckmaster, rushed towards Dalton. The robber fired, and the constable fell dead. Dalton still stood unmoved in the doorway, with his levelled gun, and calmly said, "Ah, how d'ye like that? Now, then, I'm ready for another!" This coolness saved them both, and for this time they escaped capture. But such an outrage on one of their officers roused the government. A large reward was offered for the capture of the two bush-rangers, and they were hunted through the island more hotly than ever. Driven to desperation, they seized upon a whaleboat; by threats pressed four boatmen into their service, and actually compelled them to work the boat across Bass's Straits to the opposite shores of Victoria. Here they safely landed on the solitary coast of Western Port, and made their way up to Melbourne. News of the escape of these formidable and blood-stained freebooters had been immediately transmitted to the authorities of Victoria. As they had left Van Diemen's Land in an open whaleboat there was no doubt but that they would make for the Western Port shores; and the Victoria police, stimulated by the hope of a large reward, were keenly looking out for two persons answering to the published description of the robbers. The boatmen who had conveyed them across the Strait were seen and arrested at

Dandenong, between Western Port and the capital; but no further trace of the bushrangers could be obtained. The Melbourne newspapers furnish us with the conclusion of the tragedy.

The following account of the capture of the chief of these desperadoes, from the Melbourne "Argus," is more like a page from a romance than a passage in real life It is one more instance of what appears like a special Providence laying its resistless hand on a murderer at the very moment when he seemed to have secured his escape, and dragging him forth to public justice. Within four hours after his capture, Dalton would have been on board a ship bound for England.

"Between eleven and twelve o'clock on Friday night, Dalton entered a coffee-shop, in Bourke Street, in company with a man who had engaged to put him on board the Northumberland at daylight the next morning, from Sandridge, and for which he was to pay 4*l.* This man, we understand, was quite ignorant of the person he was bargaining with. Dalton asked the proprietors of the shop if they could change him some Van Diemen's Land notes for gold, as he was about to embark for England. They could not do it, but a gentleman named Brice, formerly a cadet in the police force, suspecting all was not right, said that he could, as he was a gold-broker, if Dalton would only accompany him to his office. To this Dalton consented, and placed three 20*l.* and one 10*l.* notes of the Launceston bank in his hands. They then left the shop together; the night was extremely dark; the stranger, however, led the way, Dalton and the boatman following close behind. After proceeding some little

way, they turned into Little Collins Street, and by the back entrance, into the yard of the Police Court. Here it was so dark that the outline of the building could not be distinguished. The guide then showed them the door of his alleged office, which was no other than the clerk's room of the Swanston Street watchhouse. The man at the door was in plain clothes, and within were several of the detective officers, and two watchhouse keepers at the books, all, however, in private costume. Once in, Mr. Brice stated that he had brought these men to the station on suspicion of having come by the notes wrongfully. Dalton at this time must have known where he was, but made no observation beyond affirming that they were his, and making some remarks relative to his being brought there on so paltry an accusation. During this, he was smoking a cigar, and behaving himself in a careless nonchalant manner. Meanwhile, the detectives were making use of their eyes, and seeing if the descriptions they possessed corresponded with the figure before them. The watchhouse keeper finding that Mr. Brice had no charge to prefer against him, returned Dalton his notes, who was about to leave the office, when detectives Williams, Murray, and Eason pounced upon him, and fixed him in a corner. Dalton endeavoured to draw a pistol from his belt, but was prevented and overpowered. Finding himself mastered, he said, 'You have got the reward of 500*l.* My name is Dalton!' He then said, that if he had only seen the bars of the station-house window as he was entering, he would have sent a ball through his conductor. He further said, that he had been in the Police Court that morning, and had recollected going up a flight of steps

which he did not see that night, as he had been led in the back-way, and had he but seen those steps, his guide would have been a dead man. He was then handcuffed and searched, and two large horse-pistols heavily loaded and capped, besides a small one, were taken from his belt: he was then locked up. On Saturday morning he was brought up before Dr. Greeves, J.P., at the District Court, charged with the murder of Joseph Buckmaster, in Van Diemen's Land. The articles found upon the prisoner were then produced, and were as follows: — Two large horse-pistols, and one small one, all heavily loaded; two gold watches and guards, one of which was a lady's watch, of most chaste workmanship, and to one of the guards a gold locket was attached; a silver watch and guard, two gold chains of a massive description, three gold rings, a nugget of gold, eighty-nine sovereigns, and two half-sovereigns, three 20*l.* notes and a 10*l.* note of the Commercial Bank of Van Diemen's Land, 15*s.* in silver, two leather bags, a purse with clasp, a steel stock-buckle, a specimen, a gold pencil-case with yellow topaz at top, a ring in a case set with diamonds, pearls, and turquoises; a gold seal, a short gold chain, with seal and key attached, and two locks of hair, evidently to use as moustaches."

The following evidence, by one of those who had encountered these robbers, gives a picture of bushranging in Van Diemen's Land: — "I am a land surveyor, residing in Melbourne. On the 30th of December I proceeded to Van Diemen's Land by the Clarence steamer. On Thursday following, the 6th of January, I was on horseback riding towards Avoca, and when about a

quarter of a mile from Duxborough's public-house, I was stopped by the prisoner and another man. They were both on horseback. These men rode up, and each presented a double-barrelled gun on either side of my head. The prisoner then exclaimed, 'Who are you? and what are you about? We are the two bushrangers that you have heard of being out. We've shot two constables this morning; and you must out with what you've got, or we will as soon make you the third as any one else!' I then gave Dalton my purse, containing three 20*l.* notes, issued at Launceston,—but those produced are not the same; eighteen sovereigns, and two or three shillings, a small clasp purse, and a gold ring. When I gave the prisoner the bag, I said, 'It is a very hard case for me to be left on the road without money.' He replied, 'No, we will not leave you without any,' and gave me two half-crowns and a shilling. They then made me take the saddle and bridle off my horse, and lead it 200 or 300 yards off through a slip panel into a paddock. The men then said, 'We are now going to Captain Crear's. We don't wish to shoot the horse, but don't want to be followed.' At this they galloped off."

Dalton seemed perfectly reckless, confessed to having perpetrated, not only the murder for which he was arraigned, but other crimes, and said he wished that the next morning was appointed for his execution.

Kelly, the other accomplice, was arrested the next day, and both were sent back to Van Diemen's Land, tried, and executed.

One of the most remarkable and daring outrages re-

corded in this or any other country was the attack on the troop of the Gold Escort Company, while convoying gold from the mines to Melbourne, in July 1853. Shortly after the opening of the gold fields, Government established a regular escort service between the principal diggings and the capital. As it seemed probable that this would prove a lucrative business, a private company was established to share with Government the work and the gain. After subsisting for about a year it was dissolved. A new company arose upon its ruins, but without much prospect of success. In a country where hay is 40*l.* or 50*l.* a ton, and a common labourer's wages are 10*s.* a day, it may be conceived that the cost of maintaining efficient escorts must be very considerable; and the company soon discovered that their expenditure exceeded their receipts. They consequently practised the most rigid, and, as it proved, most fatal economy, and reduced their armed guard to four men and an officer in charge,—a number wholly inadequate for the safe convoy of thousands of ounces of gold through wild forests, in a country swarming with thrice-convicted felons. However, a long immunity from attack had induced such a sense of complete security, that it is now known that the troopers would sometimes ride by the side of the gold cart with their carbines *unloaded*, never dreaming of the possibility of a surprise. Among the many miscreants who prowled about the Mac Ivor Diggings at this period were some who had noticed the weakness of the guard, and their yet confident sense of security; and incited by the prospect of large booty, they formed a conspiracy for waylaying and robbing the Escort troop, whilst conveying the treasure to Mel-

bourne. The spot selected for the attack was in a forest about ten miles from Mac Ivor. Here the robbers, six in number, proceeded, one morning in July; and having erected a *mi-mi*, or screen of boughs, by the road-side, they awaited the arrival of the Escort troop. What then followed was thus described, when the men were arraigned at the police court at Melbourne. The first extract is from the evidence of one of the troopers, and the second that of one of the robbers who had turned Queen's evidence or approver.

"We were escorting gold and specie from Mac Ivor to Kyneton, *viâ* the road to Melbourne. When we reached about four miles on Mac Ivor side of the Mia Mia Inn, I saw Sergeant Duins, who was then riding in advance, motion with his hand to the right side of the road. I followed his motion, and that moment we received a volley of shots from a sort of mia-mia on the side of the road. I was not shot down in the first instance, and drawing my pistol, fired at a man, who fired at me at the same time. I received his discharge in the neck, jaw, and nose, and tumbled from my horse. When on the ground I noticed two men, one on each wheel; they drew the boxes (containing the gold and specie) out of the cart, when some other men lifted them up and conveyed them into the Bush. Looking around, I saw Fooks, the driver, and trooper Froaswater lying on the ground. I asked them whether they were hurt, when Fooks replied, 'I am a dead man.'"

"When the approver was introduced into Court, dark and bitter scowls of hate and vengeance were darted at him by some of the prisoners; but he appeared compara-

tively unmoved, and gave the following evidence in a calm and firm, though low tone of voice: —

"My name is John Francis, and I arrived in Van Diemen's Land under a sentence of ten years' transportation. My sentence has not yet expired, but will in September. On the 20th July last, I left the Mac Ivor in company with George Francis (my brother), George Wilson, George Melville, William Atkins, and Joseph Grey. I now recognise Melville, Wilson, and Atkins, as three of the party named. We went through the bush from the Mac Ivor towards the Mia Mia Inn, and stopped on the side of the road a few miles from the inn alluded to. We soon after heard the Private Escort coming up, and it was now between ten and eleven in the morning. Previous to this we arranged a few branches of trees, and placed two men behind, the rest of them (and I) being stationed behind trees about thirty yards higher up the road. I heard some person of the Escort cry halt, and on looking out, I saw some of the troopers firing at the two men behind the branches. We then, the rest of us, rushed down to their assistance. We all challenged the Escort men to stand, when they refused, and fired on us, when a general fight commenced. I fired at the Escort troop and observed four of the troopers wounded; two of the latter escaped, and two of us, viz., myself and the prisoner Wilson, followed them, calling upon them to surrender. They replied by shooting at us, and galloping away. I and Wilson then went down the road, and gathering up all the fire-arms we could see, we followed Atkins, Melville, Grey, and George Francis, who preceded us into the Bush, whither the boxes of gold had been carried, and we then took the gold out

of the boxes. It was whilst I and Wilson were after the two men that the gold had been removed from the cart. Where the gold was taken out of the boxes was some 200 yards from off the road into the bush, and after doing so, we travelled about seven miles through the country that day, and camped in the Bush. We resumed our route on the following morning, having first divided the gold. We passed the second night by a river's side, on Mollison's run, and continued our route in the same direction, always keeping the Bush and avoiding the road. The next night we passed in the Bush, near Kilmore, and then on the Sunday morning we all left together for Melbourne, but separated on coming to the Rocky Water Holes, Grey and George Francis accompanying me into Melbourne. That night we reached town, and proceeded to my house at Collingwood Flat, where I saw Wilson and Atkins, it being previously arranged that we were to meet there. They remained at my house all night. On the day before I was apprehended I saw the prisoner Melville, when he told me he was going to the Mauritius. The last time I saw Grey, he said he was going to Adelaide. The prisoner Wilson, I, and my brother were to have started for England in the Madagascar, and we had accordingly engaged passages in that vessel. My wife and George Francis's wife were to go with us. The confession was voluntary on my part, and there was no inducement held out to me. After the confession, Captain Mac Mahon told me that he would send me a free man from the colony, with my wife. On arranging for this attack, we had resolved, if possible, not to take human life; for we thought we could get the gold without firing."

The perpetrators of this robbery were convicted under remarkable circumstances. Several persons having been arrested on suspicion by the detective police, one of them named Francis, allured by the offer of a free pardon and 500*l.* reward, and a passage out of the colony*, confessed his guilt, and turned Queen's evidence. But after having identified and aided in capturing several of his accomplices, he seems to have repented of his treachery, and made his escape. He was quickly recaptured, and for a short time shut up in one cell with four of those against whom he had offered evidence. During that joint confinement, they doubtless heaped on the false conspirator the bitterest scorn and execration (and such men have a fiendish eloquence of their own), and the unhappy wretch was so overcome with his own accumulated guilt and treachery, that he took advantage of the momentary absence of his guards (who had suffered him to retire to the closet,) to cut his throat with a razor. His keepers, hearing a noise, entered, and found the robber in his death struggles, weltering in his blood. There now appeared no available evidence against the captured robbers; but shortly after-

* The following is Francis's *catalogue raisonné* of the robbers: — George Francis (himself), John Francis, Joe Gray alias M'Nutty (who could be found at Tommy Coulon's house, in Little Bourke Street), another named Billy, boarding at the house of the brother of the proprietor of the Bush Inn; Bob Harding (at M'Evoy's tent, opposite the Private Escort Company, M'Ivor); George Elston (a fighting man, with one tooth out, to be found at M'Ivor); George Melville, George Wilson, two others, names unknown, one of them about twenty-seven years of age, went by the name of "Little Billy," who lived with a woman named Kitty, down the road on the left hand side near the Bald Hill, M'Ivor.

wards, the brother of the suicide, who was also an accomplice, came forward and offered to turn approver in his brother's place.

Eventually, all were captured except one, and three were executed. The booty taken by the robbers was 2000 ounces of gold, besides specie. The affair proved a deathblow to the company, whose operations soon afterwards ceased. The Government Escort Service is now performed by soldiers of a foot regiment of the line, mounted and clothed for this special service. They ride with drawn swords behind the train of gold carts, and with their scarlet shirts and long boots form a gay and picturesque troop.

CHAPTER XI.

COMMERCE AND REVENUE. PRODUCE OF GOLD.

Period prior to the gold era — First effect of the discoveries — Reaction and commercial activity — High prices — Fabulous advance in rents — Meagre supplies from Europe — Reactionary repletion — Other causes of depressed markets — Yet no commercial crisis — And why not — Monetary phenomena — Extinction of the tallow staple — Parallel facts in other gold countries — Maximum prices at the mines — Increase in the capital of the country — In the number of small capitalists — In exports and imports — In revenue — Annual produce of gold.

A VIEW of the commerce, revenue, and wealth of Melbourne, during the last three or four years, shows something more than the commercial growth of a rising city. It is, rather, youth starting up at a bound to the full maturity of manhood.

From the founding of the colony up to the year 1851, when gold was discovered, Melbourne had made rapid strides in commerce and population, interrupted only by a period of about three years' depression and bankruptcy, beginning in 1841. The first house was built in November 1835. In 1836, the population was 224 souls. In 1850, the exports amounted to 1,042,000*l.* In 1853, they exceeded 9 millions sterling.

Since the discovery of gold, in September 1851, the

commerce of the country has passed through three phases: stagnation, excessive activity, and depression.

During the first fever of excitement caused by the sudden glitter of the treasures of Ballarat, trade, as well as all other routine operations, seemed suddenly paralysed. Shops, warehouses, and ships were alike deserted. But this quickly passed away. Before the end of the year commerce revived to more than its wonted activity; and from that time, continually increased in every department, yielding, till the beginning of 1853, enormous profits to all concerned in it. Then were seen the first signs of a depression, which gradually extended till it affected all kinds of merchandise. This period of lull has continued till the present time, being merely the inevitable reaction upon the state of paroxysmal activity which had preceded it.

In the year 1852, every thing conspired in raising prices to an unprecedented height.

The markets were bare. The population was every week augmenting, while the supplies bore a decreasing ratio to the demand. The price of all labour and transport had greatly advanced and continued advancing. But, above all, the influx of gold was so great and so sudden that its value, in relation to other articles, necessarily declined.

In the meantime the gains by trade were so large that shops and warehouses were eagerly sought, and rents rose higher and higher, till they had reached an almost fabulous standard. Thus it was no uncommon thing for a piece of land in one of the main streets (with, perhaps, some old wooden buildings on it), which had been leased for

60*l.* or 70*l.* a-year, to be now underlet for 1000*l.* or 1500*l.* a-year. Another cause tended to raise the value of houses and lands. A vast number of persons by successful mining had become small capitalists; and very many of these purchased land; houses and land being then almost the sole mode of investment in the colony.

It has been already said that, during 1852, the supplies were very inadequate to the increasing demands. Every day ships entered the harbour with a living freight of consumers, either from Europe, America, or the adjacent colonies. There was also an overland tide of immigration from Adelaide on the west, and another from New South Wales on the east. At the same time the native produce of the colony was on the decline, as farming had been, to a great extent, neglected for gold-digging. Yet the foreign supplies came in slowly and meagrely. Probably the merchants of England and America had not forgotten the ruinous reaction in the commerce of San Francisco (then but recent), when goods were left on the wharves as not worth the cost of carting and warehousing. This period of scarcity was prolonged by the non-arrival of several British ships which had long been detained by contrary winds.

The reiterated reports of bare markets, increasing demand, and immense profits, sometimes amounting to several hundred per cent., at length roused the merchants of England and America, and they now poured in their goods in such overwhelming profusion as glutted the markets, blocked up the wharves, and filled the warehouses to repletion. But this was not the only source of supply. The profits on commercial transactions had now become

so great, that all the wealthy retailers had turned importers; and it was nothing remarkable to hear of a shopkeeper in Collins Street having sent home orders to the amount of 10,000*l.* To this must be added that almost every newly-arriving colonist, smitten with the prospect of enormous profits, had invested what small capital he could command in merchandise; all which now helped to increase the general plethora.

Many of these small importers, in order to avoid the high charges for warehousing, sold off their goods on arrival for whatever they would bring. Other larger speculators were compelled to sell even at a sacrifice, in order to meet their engagements; and these forced sales not only depressed prices, but caused a general instability in the markets.

It is remarkable that, during all this period, and up to the present moment, there has been nothing like a commercial crisis or panic, such as usually follows close on the heels of a season of unusual prosperity and activity. Something of the kind was confidently anticipated by many at the close of 1853, especially by those who remembered the former antithesis of colonial wealth and bankruptcy about ten years earlier, when many or most of the then large capitalists sank in the sweeping vortex of ruin to rise no more. Yet nothing of the kind occurred. There have been many small failures lately, but not one among the first class of merchants and traders, — scarcely, indeed, any serious embarrassment. This happy result was doubtless partly owing to the prudence of the banks, which had learnt a timely lesson during the preceding period of ordeal. But it must be chiefly attributed to the

constant influx of gold. The monthly accession of nearly a million sterling to the wealth of the country gives such a buoyancy to the general prosperity as not all the dead weight of glutted markets, high rents, and commercial dulness can bear down or outweigh.

Nowhere, probably, will the economist find a more interesting field for study than in the monetary history of Victoria during the last three years. Most of the causes which affect the wealth and commerce of a community are here seen in intense action; and, consequently, those immutable laws which regulate the rise and fall of prices, the balancing of supply and demand, the ebb and flow of specie and bullion, and all other monetary phenomena, may here be studied in distinct and unequivocal working.

To enter into such speculations is beside my purpose and beyond my ability; but I may mention a few singular facts:—

In 1852, many kinds of merchandise sold at Melbourne at 1000 per cent. above the European price. In 1854, some goods were sold considerably under the English prices.

In 1851, the price of gold at Melbourne was about 3*l.* per ounce. In 1854, the same gold was sold for 4*l.*,—that is within a fraction of the London price. In 1851-2, the Home Government was petitioned to establish a mint at Melbourne. In 1854, English sovereigns were being largely exported from Melbourne to London. In 1852, the price of gold at Adelaide was several shillings per ounce higher than at Melbourne. In 1854, the Melbourne price rose above that of Adelaide; the export to that city

ceased, the overland escort was discontinued, and the Adelaide Government Assay Office closed.

The same causes which so immensely augmented the commerce of the colony entirely annihilated one of its two staple products, viz., tallow. The "boiling-down" establishments were now closed and neglected; for the sheep were needed as food for the newly arrived population, and their price had advanced from five shillings to twenty shillings a head.

It is instructive and interesting to observe how, in different ages and far distant countries, a sudden flood of gold acts with the same high-pressure power upon the prices of food and all the products of labour. The history of the Ural Gold Districts, of those of Central Europe, of California, and of Australia, have all the same results to record. In Victoria, previous to the gold era, almost all articles, except garden produce, were sold at very moderate prices. But thenceforward everything rapidly rose until it had attained an increase often of two or three hundred per cent. above the original price. In most cases this rise was progressive through the first twelve or eighteen months; till at last, at Melbourne, hay was sold for 40*l.* a ton. Meat rose from 2*d.* a pound to 8*d.*; butter from 1*s.* to 4*s.*; potatoes from 1*d.* to 6*d.* a pound. Eggs were sold 6*s.* a dozen; milk at 1*s.* a quart; cabbages, 2*s.* 6*d.* each. Firewood rose from 10*s.* to 3*l.* a load; 1*l.* was and is the common charge for shoeing a horse, and the same for a night's stabling. At the Diggings prices were much higher. During the winter of 1852, when the roads were well nigh impassable, the cost of carriage to Bendigo (about 100 miles) rose to 120*l.* per ton; and for a short

time flour was sold there at the rate of upwards of 200*l.* per ton, or 2*s.* a pound. The charge for shoeing a horse was 30*s.* or 40*s.* Salt was 1*s.* a pound; potatoes 1*s.* 6*d.* a pound. I have paid at Bendigo 2*l.* for one night's stabling for my horse in a rude shed. Now, however, thanks to increased competition, the mines are well supplied, and the retail prices of most of the necessaries of life are scarcely higher than at Melbourne. During the earlier period the diggers were obliged to bake their own bread or "damper" as they best might, in a portable camp-oven, or in a heap of hot ashes. One shrewd fellow, however, a baker from Adelaide, resisting the allurements of the gold lottery, started business in his own line; constructed a rude oven near the Government Establishment at Forest Creek, and supplied the neighbourhood with bread at his own prices, for there was no other baker within twenty miles of him; and with such effect did he ply his trade, that in about a year and a half he sold his bakery, and sent off some fifty pounds' weight of gold by the Overland escort to Adelaide.

The money wealth of a community is well set forth by the amount of balances and deposits in the hands of its bankers; and the marvellously rapid strides of the colony in material prosperity will be manifest from the following tabular statement, showing the amount of deposits, and number of depositors, at the time of the gold discovery, and subsequently, up to January 1. 1854.*

* For this statement I am chiefly indebted to some elaborate tables by Mr. Khull, gold broker at Melbourne, published in the "Melbourne Argus," Jan. 27. 1854.

BANKS OF VICTORIA.

Table showing Amount of Deposits and Balances and Number of Depositors from the Time of the Gold Discovery to January 1. 1854.

For the Quarter ending	Deposits and Balances.	Number of Depositors.	Total Population in Colony.
	£		
September 30. 1851 -	644,484	- -	about 79,000
December 31. 1851 -	823,709	6,000	„ 95,000
June 30. 1852 - -	2,002,873		
December 31. 1852 -	4,880,940	20,000	„ 173,000
June 30. 1853 - -	5,953,289		
December 31. 1853 -	6,316,810	30,000	„ 235,000

But the sudden expansion in the capital of the colonists between the era of the gold discovery in 1851, and the beginning of 1854, will, perhaps, be more strikingly conveyed by the following diagrams. (*Fig.* 3.)

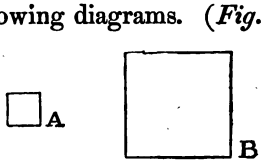


Fig. 3.

A represents wealth of colony in September, 1851.
B the increased amount in December, 1853.

During the same period the population of the colony had increased from about 79,000 to 235,000, which numbers are proportionally represented by the following figures. (*Fig.* 4.)

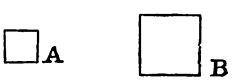


Fig. 4.

A represents population in September, 1851.
B the same in December, 1853.

It is manifest that the population of the colony has increased *threefold*, while during the same period the aggregate capital had advanced to *tenfold* its former amount.

At the close of 1851 every sixteenth individual had a deposit or balance at the banks. At the close of 1853, every eighth man had. Thus not only had the aggregate capital of the community been immensely augmented, but the number of small capitalists had also increased much faster than the population.

The following is a statement of the exports and imports during the years 1838, 1850, 1852, 1853.*

	1838.	1850.	1852.	1853.
	£	£	£	£
Exports† -	- 21,000	1,042,000	7,451,540	9,080,574 Melbourne only.
Imports‡ -	- 71,000	745,000	4,067,742	15,842,637

The total imports for 1853 amount to upwards of 15,842,000*l.* This to a population of 200,000 gives an average of no less than 79*l.* per head; being nearly twice that of the year preceding, or eight times as much as in ordinary times. No wonder then that the markets should be glutted and trade dull.

According to a recent Customs Act (1854) the only imported articles subject to duty, are ale, porter, and wine,

* On the authority of abstracts from official returns.

† The exports consist chiefly of gold and wool.

‡ The value of goods imported by British ships compared with that by foreign ships is in the proportion of about 10 to 3.

spirits, tobacco, cigars, snuff, and coffee. All other goods are free.

Government attempted to obtain a duty on the export of gold, but the measure was rejected by the Legislative Council.

The following is a statement of the revenue of the colony during the years 1850, 1851, 1852, and 1853:—

REVENUE.

1850.	1851.	1852.	1853.
£ 261,321	£ 379,824	£ 1,576,801	£ 3,202,249

A large part of these amounts is obtained from the sale of crown lands. The licenses to dig for gold yielded in 1853, 660,838*l.*

Official returns of the actual produce of the revenue during the first nine months of 1854 had been published when the last mails left Melbourne. From these we may calculate approximately that the total revenue of that year available by the Government (including one-half of the land fund*) will amount to 2,392,000.† With such an immense sum to a population of 250,000, it might be thought that the Government, if not borne down by the "embarras des richesses," would at least have ample funds for the most liberal expenditure. But the almost incredible fact is, that with these unparalleled resources,

* The other moiety, or 746,000*l.*, is applied to immigration.

† See the "Melbourne Argus" for Oct. 5. 1854.

the Government and Legislature of Victoria have entailed on themselves at the end of the year 1854, a deficit of *one million two hundred and eighty-five thousand pounds!*

The following table shows an approximate estimate of the gold raised in 1851, 1852, and 1853, and the amounts actually exported, as obtained from official returns:—

GOLD IN VICTORIA.

	Amount produced.	Amount exported.
	oz.	*oz.*
1851 - - -	345,146*	145,146†
1852 - - -	4,545,780‡	1,974,975§
1853 - - -	3,090,342‖	2,545,260¶

The total produce of gold for 1853 is nearly 129 tons; total value, at 4*l.* per ounce, 12,361,368*l.*, being upwards of a million per month. Of this vast sum nearly the whole is divisible among the miners themselves, as the amount of paid labour on the gold-field is quite insignificant.

From the most recent mails we learn that the total

* Westgarth's "Minute on the Progress and Commerce of Victoria," submitted to the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, February, 1853.

† Id. ‡ Id.

§ "Argus," Annual Summary, January 26. 1854. The vast amounts sent overland to Adelaide and New South Wales, as well as all that conveyed to England and elsewhere by passengers returning home, are not included under the head of exports, and hence the discrepancy between the amounts *raised* and those *exported*.

‖ Khull's Gold Tables, "Argus," January 27. 1854.

¶ "Argus," Annual Summary, January 26. 1854.

amount of gold shipped from Victoria in the first nine months of 1854 amounted to 1,653,999 ounces, against 1,831,468 shipped during the first nine months of 1853. Hence we may conclude that the produce of 1854 will be nearly 222,000 ounces less than that of 1853, a deficiency equivalent to 888,000*l.* The local papers refer this falling off to the fact that a large part of the mining population had settled down to ordinary industrial pursuits, especially agriculture; and that much time had been lost in migrating hither and thither, the diggers having been allured by the reputation of newly-discovered gold-fields. The average produce in October last was about 40,000 ounces a week. The colonists appear to be indulging in extravagant anticipations of the treasures speedily to be obtained from the quartz-veins (the matrix of the gold) by the process of crushing—anticipations doomed probably to disappointment; for although the Victorian veins are some of the richest in the world, yet all history and experience concur in teaching that the amount of gold derivable from quartz-crushing will never be comparable to that drawn from the alluvial workings.

Average Gains by Gold Mining. — From the "Statistical Register" for 1853, published under the authority of the Government of Victoria, we learn that the population on the gold-fields during that year varied from 57,800 to 88,320. Assuming, then, that the average mining population in 1853 amounted to 73,060 persons, we have here some reliable data upon which to calculate approximately the average earnings of the diggers, these earnings having hitherto been estimated by the wildest guessing. At least 10 per cent. must be deducted for

those not actually engaged in mining, comprising store-keepers and their servants, surgeons, shopkeepers and others, and women and children. This would leave 65,754 as the number of working miners. Dividing, then, the total produce of gold for the year 1853, namely, 3,090,342 ounces, among this number of diggers, we find that each man will obtain $\frac{1}{1}\frac{1}{3}$ths of an ounce weekly, which, at 3*l.* 18*s.* per ounce, is equivalent to 3*l.* 6*s.* It must be remembered, however, that no digger works during the fifty-two weeks of the year, that much time is lost in journeying to and from the mines, in visiting new gold-fields, and in recruiting at Melbourne, and that much money is consumed in horse-flesh, and by the waste and wear involved in a life under canvass. To this must be added, as regards individual prospects, that the chances are always considerable of a man's earnings falling far short of this average, which is probably above rather than under the truth.

CHAPTER XII.

RELIGION AND EDUCATION.

Harmony of different sects — State grants — Churches and chapels — The bishop and clergy — Position of the Church of England in the Colonies — Endowment fund — Education — Public and private schools — State aid to education — Old system and new — Statistics of schools—New university—Public library.

THE numerous sects into which the population of the three kingdoms is divided have all been transplanted to Australia, and appear there to number about the same proportion of adherents as they do in the aggregate population of the British Isles. Happily, however, for the peace of the infant community of Victoria, the spirit of sectarianism is far less rife there than in the Old Country. At Melbourne the various Protestant sects unite in the same religious and philanthropic undertakings, and meet on the same platforms. There is, indeed, a strong line of demarcation drawn between Protestant and Roman Catholic; but even here religious differences are never seen marring the harmony of social life, and very rarely are manifested in the political arena. In this as in many other respects these colonies are more assimilated to the United States than to England. Old grievances and jealousies are left behind at home, and with them the acrimony and strife that they gave birth to.

The State grants aid to all Christian denominations willing to receive it. A total sum is fixed, and this is apportioned among the various bodies according to their relative numbers of adherents; these numbers are determined by the Census returns. State aid to religion promises, however, to become a perpetual and fertile question for agitation and dispute. The English "Independents," and the members of the Scotch Free Church refuse to accept such aid for themselves, and are unwilling that others should enjoy what they reject. Indeed they are not the only persons ranged on this side of the question. The Bishop of Melbourne declares himself willing to relinquish all support from the public purse, rather than continue to receive it in common with those whom he believes to be teachers of noxious error. The great majority, however, of the members of his communion hold very different views: they see that clergymen are often most wanted by those who would be least willing to maintain them. The question of State aid to a mixed population professing various creeds, is perhaps, to an intelligent, candid, and religious mind, one of the most difficult that can be proposed for solution. At the beginning of the year 1854 it formed the subject for several public meetings at Melbourne, with the usual amount of noisy strife of words and angry declamation.

At the end of 1852 there were forty-nine churches and chapels in the colony, estimated to accommodate 16,000 persons. They belonged to the following bodies: — Church of England, 13; Presbyterian, 7; Wesleyans, 17; Independents, 3; Baptists, 2; Roman Catholics, 6; Jews' Synagogue, 1.

There are now probably 20 churches belonging to the Episcopalians. The other bodies have also increased their chapels, though by no means in the same proportion.

Much of the harmony that prevails among the various Christian communities is due to the moderation and catholic charity of the eminent and remarkable individual who now occupies the episcopal chair of Melbourne. The Church of England in Victoria is, indeed, peculiarly happy in her Bishop. Dr. Perry combines all the qualities that are required for the office of colonial bishop, an office demanding the utmost prudence, sagacity, and zeal. He is distinguished by attainments of the highest order, great administrative wisdom, and a zeal tempered by discretion. The Dean of Melbourne is worthy of being second to such a chief. Eloquent and impulsive, trustful, cordial, and devoted to his work. Of the inferior clergy some have been originally trained to other pursuits, and subsequently ordained in the colony; but the greater number were educated for the sacred office at the English Universities. As a body they certainly need fear no comparison with the average of the clergy in England, either in intellectual power or in Christian devotedness. The Bishop is loved and revered by the members of his own communion, and respected by all; and I think he is the only public man in the country who has escaped public censure. The clergy are always treated with respect, and generally with an affectionate regard by their congregations. Their actual number is very inadequate to the wants of the colony; and frequent applications are made from various parts of the country for a resident minister, with offers to provide the requisite stipend. In fact, *men*

are now needed much more than money. Surely the spirit of evangelisation must be at a very low ebb among the clergy of our Anglican Church, or they would not, could not, leave so promising a field to run to waste for want of culture. What would Gregory the Great have done in such a case? And what would have been the fate of our island if the ecclesiastics *of those days* had chosen to settle down in the lap of ease in their beautiful Italy, rather than face the unknown perils that awaited them in their attempt to reduce our ferocious ancestors under the mild sway of the Christian faith?

The position of the Church of England in Victoria and the other Australian colonies, is a very anomalous one. The Bishop is appointed by, and dependent on, the Queen as head of the State; yet the State accords no *exclusive* pecuniary aid or privileges to the Church. The Home Government and Legislature regard the Colonial Church as a portion of the Established Church, and legislate for it accordingly. But the Colonial Government and Legislature recognise it merely as one of the many denominations into which the people are divided, and amongst which its favours are to be impartially distributed. Thus the Colonial Church is hampered by all the legislative embarrassments involved in a connection with the State, without enjoying any of the material benefits that usually spring from that connection. Such a state of things can scarcely be considered as more than provisional. Its continuance is indeed wholly dependent on the attachment of the people themselves to the Established Church of their native land.

A Conference of members of the Church met in Mel-

bourne in 1851, under the presidency of the Bishop, and laid the foundation of a fund for the permanent endowment of their clergy. Subsequently, however, the grants by the local legislature were so much increased, as to render any other endowment for the present superfluous.

Here, as everywhere else, the mass of the community regard Religion as part of the routine decencies of life, and not much more; while with a section, numerically insignificant, it is the dominating influence and ruling principle. Within this inner narrow circle you may observe much more of that oneness of heart and action —that "attraction of cohesion," which so remarkably distinguished the first centuries of Christianity from all subsequent ages,—the unity of the CATACOMBS, not that of the VATICAN. This spirit develops itself in *tea meetings*, held for advancing certain specified objects of Christian philanthropy. These are frequent, and numerously attended,—some of the leading men in the State often taking a prominent part in them.

Education.—Schools for the upper and middle classes are usually inferior to those of England. On the contrary, schools for the lower ranks, and such as receive aid from the State, are often under much abler superintendence than similar institutions in the old country. It is not difficult to account for this. In a land where everything is exorbitantly dear a private schoolmaster must necessarily possess some capital before he can even provide a house for his pupils. Now there are not a few who joined the general rush to the new gold country possessed of considerable attainments, but having very little cash. Such being thus disabled from opening a school on their own

account, after failing at the mines, and tired of a desultory life of disappointment, are glad to take refuge in the mastership of a parochial school,—a position which they would probably have scorned at home.

Hitherto the State grants in aid of education have been dispensed by two Boards which assisted in maintaining two different classes of schools; viz., one in which children of all creeds meet in the same school, and receive the same instruction; and another in which each school belongs to some one denomination, and to that exclusively. By a recent Act, however, both of these have been, or are to be, abolished, and the grants are to be made on the principle acted upon by the Committee on Education of the Privy Council in England; viz., that aid be granted to all schools indiscriminately, if placed under the general surveillance and direction of the Government Inspectors. At the end of 1852, there were 115 schools in the colony. The number of scholars was 7,841; viz., 4,322 boys, and 3,519 girls. The number of schools is probably doubled at present, and that of scholars more than doubled.

If the people of Melbourne are not themselves sedulous cultivators of literature and science, they are at least fully alive to the value of such pursuits, and of their importance to the dignity and welfare of the State. They are now laying the foundation of an institution whose influence may ere long be felt throughout the South Pacific. On the 3rd of July last (1854) the foundation-stone of the Melbourne University was laid by the new Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Charles Hotham. The establishment is to be on a scale commensurate with the opulence of the infant metropolis. The University has been endowed by the

Legislative Council with large revenues. There are to be at first four professorships with salaries of 1000*l.* a-year each and a residence,—viz., one of the Greek and Latin languages and ancient history, one of natural science, one of mathematics, and one of logic, modern literature, and political economy. A public library has also been established, and 4000*l.* remitted to England for the purchase of books.

CHAPTER XIII.

CRIME AND POLICE.

Population in general not vicious — Real cause of excess of crime — Expirees and conditionally-pardoned men — Frequency of daring outrages — Demoralisation of the police force — Its reconstruction — Decrease of crime — Horse-stealing — Curse of intemperance — "Hocussing" — Deaths from drunkenness — Average consumption of spirits — Crusade against intemperance.

DURING the last three years Victoria has been almost as remarkable for the number and atrocity of its crimes as for the yield of its Gold Fields. An idea has become prevalent that, from the very nature of things, such a concurrence might have been anticipated; that a land of gold must almost necessarily become a land of crime, and that a rich Gold Field generates criminals as corruption breeds maggots. A closer scrutiny, however, will clearly show that the history of Victoria lends no support to this theory. True it is that the annals of the colony since 1851 exhibit an appalling list of atrocious crimes; and that, perhaps, never before had so small a community contained so many villains of the deepest dye. But it is not less true that the great mass of the mining population are as industrious, moral, and well-conducted as the average population of any country in Europe. The real cause of the abundance of crime in Victoria is its proximity to that sink of England's felony, that dreadful den of depravity,—Van Diemen's Land. The communication with

this devoted island is frequent and rapid. Victoria is the Land of Promise to the Van Diemen's Land convict, *Expirees*, or those whose sentence has run out, and conditionally-pardoned men flock over hither, and are soon lost in the crowd of Melbourne or of the Mines. Prisoners of the Crown, still under sentence, escape from their guards, roam over the island, are hunted down by the convict police, and at last, stained with blood and steeped in crime, seize upon a whale-boat, cross the intervening strait, land upon the shores of Victoria, and make for the Mines, sometimes marking their course with deeds of blood. At first, everything in the new gold country seemed to conspire to favour the perpetration of crime. At the Gold Fields there was a scattered population, living in frail tents, while almost every one possessed more or less of the precious metal. In the towns the streets were dark, the suburbs were scattered and detached. In the country, or "Bush," the diggers, migrating from district to district, or to and from the towns, traversed roads which led over desolate plains and through mountainous lonesome forests. At the Mines the police for some time consisted chiefly of raw recruits. In the towns the force was almost worthless. Its ranks had been supplied by *expiree* convicts from Van Diemen's Land; but these robbed the citizens whom they were paid to protect. With such a population, and under such favouring circumstances, crime at length attained a frightful universality, and seemed at one time to threaten a new Reign of Terror. Every day the newspapers teemed with tales of murder and robbery. There were murders on the roads, robberies and outrages at the diggings and

in the suburbs. In the very streets of the capital persons were knocked down after nightfall and plundered. A piratical attack was made on a ship lying in the harbour laden with gold, and about 8000 ounces of gold taken from her. The armed troop of an "Escort Company" was attacked in the forest by eight desperadoes, the troopers disabled and put to flight, and the booty seized and distributed among the robbers. One bold ruffian entered the office of a gold-broker during broad daylight, pointed a revolver at his head, and demanded his treasure. Another gold-broker was stopped, or "stuck up," whilst one morning driving to his business from his house in a suburban village. The gaols were crowded to overflowing. Thirteen capitally convicted criminals were executed at Melbourne in 1853, and five of them within a few weeks. The expenditure for the maintenance of order, the administering justice, and the suppression of crime, at length amounted to about 700,000*l.* per annum. In the country travellers almost always carried arms. Indeed the upper classes owed their comparative immunity from assault chiefly to the fear inspired by their revolvers, and to the greater facilities for robbing drunken diggers at roadside public-houses. At length, when things were at the worst, the colonists, moved by the instinct of self-preservation, determined to stop this influx of Van Diemen's Land prisoners, to whom they rightly attributed nine-tenths of these outrages.

It had long been a custom with the Governors of Van Diemen's Land to grant to prisoners of the Crown, after serving part of their time, conditional pardons, by which they were authorised to proceed to any place except back

to the British Isles. Great numbers of this class were now pouring into Victoria, where, removed from the iron rule to which they had been subjected in the Convict Colony, they soon resumed their old practices. There was no British law forbidding these men from crossing over to Victoria; but the Legislative Council of the Colony now passed a special enactment rendering it penal for any individual of the class to set foot on their shores. This was an extreme measure, but fully justified by the urgency of the case.*

At the first flash of the gold discovery, in 1851, the immediate effect of the general rush to the Diggings was a scarcity of labour and a rise of wages. The police force, sharing in the general impulse that urged all to try their luck at the Mines, demanded increased pay, or, as an alternative, threatened to resign. The Executive, swayed by an impolitic economy, refused to raise the men's wages to the new standard of remuneration, alleging, without proof or reason, that no increase would be sufficient to retain them in the force. The men resigned accordingly, and thus the Colonial Police became disorganised at the very moment when it ought at any sacrifice to have been kept up to its full efficiency. It was now attempted to remedy the mischief by drafting over from Van Diemen's Land prisoners who had fulfilled their sentence in whole or in part. The old maxim, touching the "setting of thieves to catch thieves," seemed to justify this proceeding; but, as already stated, it rather exasperated than cured the evil; for the men in becoming constables did not cease from being thieves.

* See Chapter XV.

At the beginning of 1853, however, a great reform took place in the Colonial Police; the whole was reorganised on a new model. Instead of being split into several independent departments, the entire force, now greatly augmented, was placed under a central administration, with one chief. The officers were all men of gentle birth and some education, and rose through a gradation of rank. The men were well clad and housed, and paid after the colonial standard of wages, the private receiving 10 shillings a day. A new corps of cadets was formed as a nursery for officers.

The results of the new system, which was established almost regardless of cost, were soon visible. No longer the midnight assassin prowled about the streets and suburbs of the capital. The older and more settled mining districts were now secure from marauders. The bushranger was rarely seen in the great lines of traffic, though he still infested the remoter and newer diggings, and lurked in the recesses of the forest. A detective police was also organised, and proved highly efficient in hunting out the veterans of crime. The young cadets distinguished themselves by their bold encounters with the ruffians of the road. By the end of 1853 many of the desperadoes, who had become emboldened by easy success and continued impunity, were captured, convicted, and either executed or condemned to the chain-gang for 10, 20, or even 30 years. The Police Force of the Colony is now highly efficient, and crime so rapidly abating, that we learn from a Report by the Acting Chief Justice that, notwithstanding the great increase in population, the actual number of convictions was thirteen less in 1853

than in 1852; while, probably, the difference in the actual amount of crime was much greater, because, thanks to the improved police, fewer criminals escaped detection and punishment. Still, however, the aggregate of crime is frightful. In 1853, with an average population of about 205,000, there were 453 convictions out of 682 cases tried.* About one-fourth, or 112, of the convictions were for horse-stealing. Probably the number of offences of this class actually committed were ten times as numerous; but in such a country, and with so scattered a population, the difficulties in conviction for this crime are only equalled by the facilities for committing it. Whole columns of the newspapers were filled with advertisements of horses lost and stolen; and at last, to check the growing evil, auctioneers were made legally responsible for the value of any stolen horse they might sell. Such is still the Colonial law; and to protect themselves, the auctioneers levy a commission of 10 per cent. on the seller of the horse.

If intemperance is the parent of crime and misery in England, in Victoria it is still more emphatically so. Even before the gold era it was the damning vice of the Australian colonies. The shepherds and stock-keepers would live without a murmur for months or years in their solitary huts in the Bush on the simplest fare, and then squander their earnings in a debauch at the first public-house they came to. There are authentic stories of these men ordering dozens of champagne, pouring it out into a

* The Chief Justice states that, had the same ratio of crime existed in 1853 as in 1852, there would, owing to increased population, have been 1000 cases for trial instead of 682.

bucket, and then drinking it off out of their tin pannicans. They were indeed proud of these sort of feats, and boasted of them. When such men suddenly and easily acquired hundreds of pounds, of course they plunged more recklessly than ever into the mire of sensualism. At the Diggings every gully and "flat" was infested with "sly grog-tents," which eluded all the activity of the police, or, if some were rooted out, others instantly sprang up in their place. Licensed public-houses were not allowed at the Mines; and this seemed only to stimulate the illicit traffic. Many of the sly grog-shops were mere dens of ruffianism — the rendezvous of bushrangers, — kept by the worst characters. If the unwary were entrapped into one of these, — farewell hope. The drugged potion is prepared and administered; the victim, senseless and powerless, is robbed of everything, and then cast out into the recesses of the forest, there at length to awake to a sort of dreamy consciousness that he had been plundered. This is called "hocussing." Sometimes the brain is never fully restored. A digger, who was thus recently treated, has described his sensations, in a letter to a friend, which has been published. He had lost himself in the Bush, and at last discovered a solitary tent, which he entered with some misgivings as to the character of those he might find there. His worst anticipations were realised. Not without suspicion he began to drink what was offered to him. He watched the result; and, as the dreadful feeling began to steal upon him, he at once rushed out of the tent, and was pursued by the robbers through the depths of the forest. The poison began to do its work; and as he bounded from tree to tree his frenzied fancy pictured his

pursuers as fiends fiercely hunting down their prey. For once, however, their victim escaped.

But it is in the towns that the accursed vice of intemperance reckons most of its victims. At Melbourne almost every corner of every street is a public-house. The "lucky digger" arrives at Melbourne for a "spell." Having got his gold from the Escort Office, he takes it to a broker and converts it into cash, which he then deposits in the hands of the publican at whose house he has put up,—fearing to retain it himself, lest he should be robbed during the night by one of the many who occupy the same chamber as himself, or in a drunken fit during the day. The publican does not rob his guest; but he ruthlessly plies him with ardent spirits. The man drinks, and drinks, and drinks till he has outdrunk his gold; or perhaps, worse,—till he is arrested by the horrors of *delirium tremens*. These tragedies are not rare exceptional cases, but they are commonly occurring. The most melancholy consideration is, that a large class regard such bestial debaucheries as manly, if not heroic; and will exultingly tell you how, in a few weeks, they made 50*l.* or 100*l.* at the diggings, and "knocked it down" in a fortnight or month at Melbourne. The class now referred to consists wholly of the old "bushmen;" the new colonists—those attracted to Victoria by the gold—are careful and frugal.

In the first half of 1853, there were no less than forty-seven deaths from intemperance at Melbourne; viz., eight directly, and thirty-nine indirectly.* As regards lunacy, we learn from Lord Shaftesbury, the Chairman of the Commissioners of Lunacy in England, that here six-

* Vide Report of City Coroner.

tenths of the cases arise from intemperance. In Victoria, then, we may conclude that the proportion increases with the increased drunkenness. In a lecture by Dr. Singleton, a physician at Melbourne, it is estimated approximately from the Customs returns, that, during 1853, the people of Victoria consumed no less than 1,122,394 gallons of spirits, and 1,432,615 gallons of wine, or about two millions worth of spirits and wine for a population averaging, perhaps, 210,000 souls! This would be more than 9*l.* each, for men, women, and children. Not a day passes without a long list of convictions for drunkenness at the Police Offices of the towns.

The mischief has of late assumed such an alarming aspect, that several of the most energetic and philanthropic of the colonists have begun a crusade against it in earnest. Following the famous example of the State of Maine, they have formed a "Victoria Liquor Law League," for obtaining penal enactments against the sale or importation of spirituous liquors. It is of course easy to adduce numerous objections to such a measure,—it would be despotic and inquisitorial,—it would strike out one of the chief items of the State Revenue,—it would interfere with the liberty of the subject. Yet, when the horrors of the actual practice are fully appreciated,—the death, disease, and madness; the crime, depravity, and degradation; the untold amount of domestic wretchedness; the hopeless, helpless slavery entailed on the victim,—let all this be understood and felt, and it will be hard to say what sacrifice could be too costly which should ensure the annihilation of this modern Moloch, at whose altar are yearly immolated thousands of the bodies and immortal souls of our fellow men.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW PUBLIC AFFAIRS ARE ADMINISTERED IN THE COLONY.

The late Lieutenant-Governor — Victoria separated from New South Wales — Paralysis of the Government during the Gold Fever — Incapacity of Heads of Departments — Impolitic economy — Convict constables — Spasmodic activity of Government — Character of men in office.

It has been the singular fortune of the late Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria to preside over the development of a state from its first beginning up to the point of expansion represented by a revenue of three millions sterling a-year. On a review of the history of the colony since its foundation to the present time, one is struck with the remarkable fact that, on the one hand, never before did a State make such marvellous strides in general progress and prosperity under the administration of one individual; and, on the other, never was Government assailed with a more continuous discharge of bitter invective. To say that "all governors of colonies are unpopular," is an easy but an indolent and unsatisfactory way of explaining the phenomenon.

In ordinary times, all that is required of a colonial governor is a fair share of administrative skill and sagacity. But there are periods when the highest qualities of statesmanship are demanded; tides in the national affairs which

must be taken at the flood. Victoria has been passing through one of these periods.

From the first founding of the colony in 1836, up to the period of the gold discoveries in 1851, the Government establishments had grown with the rapid growth of the colony, and were now in a tolerable state of efficiency, though there was room enough for administrative reforms. Up to the year 1850 Victoria, under the name of Port Phillip, had formed a district governed by a Superintendent, dependent on the Sydney Government; but in that year, it was erected into an independent colony, under the name of the reigning sovereign,—an event celebrated by festivities in the towns and bonfires on the mountain-tops, from end to end of the country. It was fortunate that this event preceded the gold discoveries; for all the embarrassments of that period would have been much augmented if the seat of supreme government had been distant 600 miles from Melbourne. As it was, the Lieutenant-Governor of the new colony was thrown on his own resources, and responsible only to the Colonial Minister in London.

The social revolution that attended the gold era was soon seen telling lamentably on every department of the Government. All the inferior officers and servants,—clerks, policemen, boatmen, &c. threw up their posts. Their places were either filled up by new and incompetent hands or not supplied at all; and at the very moment when the country was passing through an eventful crisis, the Government was left helpless and paralysed. After this had lasted some months a change for the better commenced; and reforms and ameliorations were gradually applied to every

branch of the public service; so that in the year 1854 the administration of the colony was in a higher state of efficiency than before the gold epoch.

At the beginning of 1852 Government became reduced to a state of the most humiliating helplessness. Its constables were thieves, and a by-word for scorn at the Mines. At Mount Alexander there was a population of thousands, and yet the duties of the Post-office were there undertaken by a private speculator. The Police at the Diggings, though strong enough to exact the license-fees, were impotent to repress crime. The Gold Escort Service was so inefficiently performed that a Private Escort Company was set on foot, and was soon distinguished for the superior celerity of its operations as compared with those of the Government. Everywhere, in every circle, the Government was the mark of ridicule and invective,—from the merchant at Melbourne to the shaggy digger at the Mines; and no wonder, because every one felt personal inconvenience from an inefficient and ill-ordered public service.

In England public censure passes harmlessly over the head of the Chief of the State and lights upon the advisers of the Crown. This process is reversed in the Colonies. All the sins and short-comings of the subordinates are visited upon their superior, the Governor; so that many and deep were the execrations now poured forth on Lieut.-Governor La Trobe. The acknowledged defects and deficiencies in the public service at this period have been often excused by referring them to the difficulties of the times, the scarcity of labour, the impossibility of finding at a moment's notice fit persons to fill the numerous posts that had to be created. To the latter difficulty we can hardly

attribute too much weight, seeing that very many of the new functionaries were necessarily strangers just arriving in the colony, untrained to their new duties, and unaccustomed to colonial life. Still, however, it is clear that such palliations and excuses for maladministration cannot be urged beyond a certain limit; and it must not be forgotten that in spite of the difficulties of the times, private establishments were all this time being doubled and quadrupled, and their operations immensely extended. As to scarcity of labour, there was never a time during the gold mania when labour could not be had by those who would pay the market price for it; and the resources of the Government were practically almost boundless.

The Lieut.-Governor was himself distinguished by great mental and personal activity, and devoted himself to his public duties. In the summer he was often at the Government offices at six in the morning. He made frequent visits of inspection to the country districts, and was now at Geelong, now at Ballarat, and then at Mount Alexander, travelling rapidly without state, accompanied by his Aide-de-Camp or Secretary. Had all his officials been as energetic as their chief, he would have escaped much angry animadversion. But he committed two great errors. First, he filled some of the most important posts in the Government with men of the most ordinary capacity, — mere red tapists and slaves of routine; being, unless greatly belied, more anxious to secure in his coadjutors men of pliant docility than of commanding talents. Mediocrity at the head of a department propagated itself through all the subordinate grades, and hence sluggishness and inefficiency and want of foresight characterised every

branch of the public service, and manifested itself in vexatious delays and egregious blunders to be rectified by expensive expedients. The machinery of Government, as compared with that of private establishments, was more slow, more cumbrous, and more costly. Thus, for instance, some hundreds of thousands were spent on a main line of road to Mount Alexander. This road became the last resource of the lazy and the helpless. All who could get nothing else to do were received to work on it, and all were paid uniform wages, however much or little they performed. The indolence of "Government men" soon became proverbial, and the common mark of ridicule to the laborious diggers as they journeyed up to the Mines. I have heard of one of the road-overseers telling his men "not to work too hard, for it was Government work."* This at length was put an end to. But while vast sums were being expended on this line, the road running through the heart of the great Bendigo Gold Field was allowed to run to ruin, and the drays of the diggers to make their way through, or be wrecked in, the deep mud holes and unbridged creeks, close under the eyes of the Government officials.

Between Kyneton and Mount Alexander it was attempted to carry the new road across a deep morass, which here stretched across the line of traffic; but so unsuccessfully, that part of it sank down and disappeared, while the remainder was impassable, and soon deserted. Another section of the same road, near the Bush Inn, shows the

* There is a popular and significant distinction with Australian operatives between "piece-work speed" (the quickest), "day-work speed," and "Government-speed" (the slowest).

contrasted results of similar difficulties encountered by engineering skill; for here a "dismal swamp,"—the dread of the carriers, and almost impassable during winter to those on foot,—has been crossed by a good macadamised road; and the most difficult section of the line, having luckily fallen into skilful hands, has been the most successfully executed.

The incapacity of the Heads of Departments was one main source of the inefficiency of the Public service. But the general paralysis which seized every department of Government during the first feverish excitement of the gold discoveries, must be referred to an erroneous impression or theory which then took possession of the Lieutenant-Governor's mind.

It is well known how suddenly the scale of wages rose during the first few months of the gold era;—the pay even for unskilled labour advanced from two shillings a day, to ten, twelve, and fifteen shillings. At the first rush to the Diggings Government raised the pay of their subordinate officers and men 50 and 75 per cent. The Heads of Departments urged the necessity of a much greater advance if the men were to be retained at their posts; for the pay, as thus increased, still fell far short of the current wages of the day. But the increase in the pay already conceded, being commensurate with the increased price of food, fuel, and house-rent, the Lieutenant-Governor unhappily persuaded himself that it would be in vain to attempt, by further concessions, to keep men from the Diggings. At this point "he took his stand;" and, as he was satisfied that all efforts to keep up an efficient force by liberal wages would be in vain, he resolved to

make no effort. In a despatch to the Colonial Secretary in January, 1852, the Lieutenant-Governor writes,—"Having by the increase sanctioned, already reported, conceded that which I think right and clearly defensible, I have had to take my stand, and decline to yield to a pressure, less arising from causes above assigned than from the excitement of the day. It is in vain to pretend to bid against the hopes and the expectations induced by the results of the Gold Fields. I am aware that the increased provision will leave many departments in an embarrassed and imperfect condition, and that the greatest difficulty will be experienced in inducing persons of proper qualifications to enter the service, even at the high rates of remuneration, comparatively speaking, now offered; but I am perfectly sure that no concession or practical augmentation of emolument would meet the views and wishes of many of the inferior classes of subordinate officers more especially, or bribe them to retain their situations." Yet, so far was this opinion from being universal, that, at this very time, the citizens of one of the wards of Melbourne, on being requested to act as special constables, refused, on the ground that "there was no want of good men for the constabulary, if proper remuneration was afforded."

The most mischievous effects now followed. Almost all the old trained hands threw up their places. Fifty-one horse and foot constables resigned in one day. The Survey Office was crippled when its duties became most onerous and important. The best hands were either engaged on the Gold Fields or in private employ. The State paid the worst wages, and was therefore the worst served. Convict constables from Van Diemen's Land

were drafted into the thinned ranks of the police, lowered its tone, disgraced the force, and robbed when occasion offered. Nor was it till a more enlightened policy was adopted and adequate remuneration offered, that the police and other departments regained their efficiency.

During the last three years the action of the Government of Victoria may be described as one of habitual languor, varied occasionally by spasmodic activity. An evil is allowed to gather head until public long-suffering is exhausted, and a burst of public clamour elicited, and then a desperate effort is made to remove the ground of complaint at any cost. Such was the case with that important institution which has the hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows of thousands in its hands—the Post-office. Its inefficiency has already been alluded to. At Melbourne, long after the opening of the gold era, great crowds daily collected round the solitary window where letters were deliverable, and jostled and strove from morn till night for access to the inapproachable hole in the wall; the weak and the delicate mixed up in the *mêlée* with rugged bearded diggers and "rude mechanicals." There was no attempt at any provisional amelioration of this crying evil. It was not till 1853, that a vigorous effort was at length made, a large iron building erected, and the present complete and admirable organisation introduced.*

* Some idea of the magnitude of the present operations of the Melbourne Post-office may be gathered from the following statement: — On the 12th of July last (1854) there were received, by the English overland mail, 31,961 letters and 72,542 newspapers, in 230 boxes. By other ships 1450 letters, 1193 newspapers; and by inland mails 4751 letters and 1024 newspapers. Total received that day,

Again: owing to the immense increase in trade, the wharves of Melbourne had become miserably inadequate, while the want of proper approaches over the aboriginal swamp that still bordered the quays greatly added to the time, cost, and difficulty of discharging vessels. The wharves were piled high with all sorts of merchandise, and valuable goods were thrown down into, and half submerged in the adjacent swamp. At length, after a due amount of forbearance, the merchants met, passed sundry angry resolutions against the Government, and sent a deputation to remonstrate with the Governor; and, if he refused, to offer to undertake the work themselves. At length the authorities were roused out of their immobility, and the "impossible" work of forming approaches was set about in earnest, and quickly completed, but at a prodigious cost; for it was now the midst of the rainy season, and the new approaches were so urgently demanded, that a *carte blanche* was given for their instant execution.

In private life Governor La Trobe was distinguished by intelligence, extensive knowledge, high-minded rectitude, and unostentatious charity; and his genial disposition and personal affability won him the regard of all who held office under his rule. His memory will probably be more popular than his presence. Those whom he employed in places of high trust, if not eminent for mental power, were always of spotless integrity, and often of high moral worth; and this doubtless availed much in

38,162 letters, 836 registered, 74,759 newspapers. All the letters and nearly half the newspapers were delivered and forwarded on the two following days. This return does not include the town letters.

raising and maintaining the moral tone of colonial society. His difficulties were great, and he was often assailed with undeserved reproach and charges as bitter as they were unfounded; but he was too slow in seeking counsel out of the official pale, too jealous of animadversion, and too ready to believe that all censure and opposition must spring from corrupt, interested, or vindictive motives. The advent of his successor, Sir Charles Hotham, was hailed with enthusiasm. It will be curious to watch his career, and note how far the glowing anticipations of the colonists will be fulfilled.

CHAPTER XV.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS.

Comparative impotence of public opinion in the colonies — Illustrated by case of Transportation — England's treatment of her colonies — New era of responsible Executives — Act to exclude conditionally-pardoned convicts — Disallowed by the Crown — Recent agitation in favour of a new Act — Question of Crown lands — Failure of Home legislation — Causes of failure — Successful colonies not hothouse plants — The Australian squatting-system — Its gradual development — Its evil results — "Unlock the lands" Partial amelioration in land regulations — The Magna Charta of the squatters — The question at issue — Best mode of deciding on it.

I AM not now going to enter into lengthy disquisitions relative to the subjects which form the heading of this Chapter, because I know well that the English reader cares almost as much about the politics of Japan as of the colonies of England. It is indeed of this very indifference that the colonists complain so bitterly; for its practical effects are felt to be momentous and most pernicious. They do not complain of being abandoned to themselves; but of this, that while the mother-country knows nothing and cares nothing of the affairs of her colonies, she still insists upon regulating those affairs. They ask that England should either think of them more or else govern them less. All this becomes very plain and palpable to

every one before he has landed a month on the Australian shores. That ultimate tribunal to whose decisions all, from the Imperial Parliament down to the humblest vestry, must bow in England, has in Australia no direct jurisdiction over the most important questions that can affect the moral and material prosperity of the state. In the old country, PUBLIC OPINION is like some of those mysterious agencies in nature, which, though they can neither be seen nor handled, are yet ever present and ever active; ordering, adjusting, and balancing all things; governing the apple in its fall, the ocean in its ebb and flow, and the planets in their ceaseless march. But there is one department of the state which hardly owns its sway, and that is the Colonial Office. In the colonies, public opinion regulates all minor matters, as it does here; but over many of the most important interests of the people it exercises no control, except as it may be feebly echoed in England. Thus, for instance, on the subject of transportation; every man, woman, and child in Victoria were united in execrating the practice. In the neighbouring colonies the feeling against it was almost as strong. The colonists petitioned, remonstrated, argued, threatened to send back to Britain a shipload of the worst malefactors they could find, as Franklin proposed to send to England snakes for her convicts. But all in vain: still the maternal heart of England continued to inflict on her expatriated children the worst evil that one state can inflict on another—worse than poisoning the wells of water. She ruthlessly persisted in inoculating these young communities with the poison of vice and depravity in its lowest and worst forms. Year after year new shiploads of felons were discharged

upon the devoted shores of Van Diemen's Land, whence they migrated, with or without permission, to the adjacent colonies, where a scattered population, much wealth, and great difficulties in the way of prosecution and conviction offered every facility for their old pursuits. At length public opinion in England became fairly directed to the monstrous evil; and, thanks rather to the "Times" newspaper and Mr. Robert Lowe than to the Colonial Minister, transportation, the curse of Australia, received its doom. But it will still be many a long year, if ever, before those fair regions cease to exhibit the traces of that dreadful scourge with which England, the humane and generous, during half a century afflicted her helpless colonies. Had an enlightened public opinion been brought to bear on the subject at home, or had the colonists themselves been permitted to arbitrate on the vexed question, (and who had a better right to do so?) the system could not have subsisted a month.

On a general review of the history of the British colonies during the last 100 years, it is hardly too much to say that, as Russia has been defined to be a despotism limited by assassination, so the rule of our colonies has been a despotism limited by rebellion. In proof we might point to the United States, to Canada, to that recent memorable passage in colonial history, when the Cape colonists, as one man, indignantly and successfully repelled the attempt to throw a shipload of convicts on their shores.

A happier era has, however, dawned on the great colonies of Britain in the South Pacific. English Ministers, tired of their own repeated failures in legis-

lating for the antipodes, have at length accorded to the colonies the privilege of framing constitutions for themselves; and the colonists, during the last two years, have been exercising their new powers in a way which shows that they were not unworthy of them. Representative assemblies and responsible executives form the leading features of those constitutions. The important question, however, has still to be determined,—What are the limitations to be placed on the exercise of colonial authority; and what powers are to be reserved to the Crown and the Imperial Parliament?

In a previous Chapter I mentioned that the Legislative Council of Victoria, alarmed at the frequency of the most atrocious outrages, had passed a stringent measure directed against the class of "conditionally pardoned" prisoners of the Crown, by whom many or most of these outrages were known to have been perpetrated. The "conditional pardon" was granted by the Governor of Van Diemen's Land, and authorised the convict to proceed to any place except back to Great Britain, whence he had been transported. Vast numbers of this class had been attracted to Victoria by its gold, and the extraordinary facilities for committing the worst crimes with impunity. It was ascertained that by far the greater part of those convicted at the criminal courts were Van Diemen's Land convicts. By the new Act, any conditionally pardoned convict who should be found in Victoria was to be deemed illegally at large, and subjected to imprisonment and hard labour. The law did not affect those who held *free* pardons.

Sir William Denison, the Governor of Van Diemen's

Land, under whose authorisation the conditionally pardoned convict claimed the right of choosing his residence, felt aggrieved by the new law, and complained and remonstrated to the Colonial Secretary. The Home Government subsequently disallowed it, urging that such an enactment derogated from the Queen's prerogative of pardon. But when the disallowance reached Victoria, the colonists indignantly replied, that they could not have their lives and properties sacrificed to constitutional maxims. And so strong and unanimous was the public feeling, that Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe allowed the Act to remain in force till a remonstrance should have been sent back to the Colonial Minister. However unconstitutional the colonial statute might be, it was clearly vindicated and authorised by the first great law of self-preservation.

By the very last mail we learn that this question is again engrossing the public mind at Melbourne. A demonstration has lately been made there, in the shape of a monster meeting, at which some 12,000 of all classes attended, to urge on the local government the re-enactment of the Bill of Exclusion, the term of which expired in October last. The most perfect unanimity prevailed; indeed, there are not two opinions on the subject throughout the country. The question resolves itself into this: Is the prerogative of the Crown to submit to a technical limitation, or are the lives and properties of the people of Victoria to be imperilled? Surely reason, justice, and common sense have but one answer to give. If the exercise of this prerogative of "mercy" must infallibly prove the fruitful source of crime, and let loose new

hordes of ruffians upon a country already smarting under the outrages of imported malefactors, forego that prerogative, though sanctioned by ten thousand precedents from the days of the Norman Conqueror to our own.

The question has lately assumed a new and very singular phase. We learn by the latest mails (January, 1855) that Sir Charles Hotham, the present Governor of Victoria, hoping to effect a compromise between the claims of the Crown and the interests of his colony, proposed a new measure which would have authorised him to send Commissioners to the ports of Van Diemen's Land, to grant passports to well conducted men of the class which had received conditional pardons. But the colonists of Van Diemen's Land, alarmed and indignant at a measure which threatened practically to *sort* their convict population, to carry off all that was good to Victoria, and leave the dregs of irreclaimable depravity behind, introduced a counter measure into their Legislative Council, in virtue of which Sir C. Hotham's Commissioners are to be seized and imprisoned, and all who may aid them fined 100*l.* The squabble has, in fact, all the threatening aspect of the commencement of inter-colonial warfare. Van Diemen's Land wants to distribute her thousands of felons over the neighbouring colonies — anywhere, so that she may get rid of them; just as we read of the inhabitants of a certain city on the lower slopes of Mount Etna, who, when their own town was threatened with destruction by an advancing stream of lava, broke down a barrier and diverted the fiery current upon a neighbouring city; and as the inhabitants of this city were driven to take up arms in self-

defence, so the people of Victoria resort to the most stringent means in their power to dam out the threatened flood of crime and depravity; and then they are met by the Crown lawyers and told that they must desist from their opposition, for if their country is ruined, their houses pillaged, their roads infested by banditti, and their very language depraved, yet that all this is sanctioned by time-honoured precedent, and demanded by the just claims of the Royal Prerogative! These are some of the bitter fruits of our long persistence in the unrighteous system of transportation. So surely does political injustice lead to administrative embarrassment.

The immediate cause of the late great popular demonstration was the receipt of a despatch from the Colonial Secretary, Sir G. Grey, strongly disapproving of the Act for the exclusion of conditionally pardoned men, and suggesting to the Lieut.-Governor that he should at once grant free pardons to those convicts who, under the clauses of this Act, were suffering under penal sentences in the gaols of Victoria. The excitement was heightened by a proposal which had been made by the Legislature of Van Diemen's Land to liberate speedily the whole convict population in that unhappy island; which would practically amount to letting them loose on the Golden Colony.

The 12,000 persons of all ranks who assembled at Melbourne last October to avert the threatened calamity offer sufficient proof of the unanimity of feeling pervading the entire community. What that feeling was, and how much this vast multitude were in earnest, is shown by the resolutions passed on that occasion without one

opposing voice.* How far the feelings of loyalty to the British Crown are already compromised is indicated by

* These Resolutions were as follow: —

"1. That this meeting emphatically protests that the Sovereign of the British realms neither hath nor ought to have any right, prerogative, or power, warranting the letting loose in the colony of Victoria of the convicted criminals of other countries or colonies.

"2. That, as the certain effect of acting upon the suggestion of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in his recent despatch would render the Royal prerogative odious to the colonists, and would seriously endanger the connection between this country and the parent state, this meeting requests the Right Worshipful Chairman to forward to the Lieutenant-Governor a copy of these resolutions, and to urge upon His Excellency to refuse compliance with Sir George Grey's suggestion, and to decline the responsibility of inflicting such an outrage upon the colony.

"3. That the following petition to the Legislative Council, praying that Honourable House to reject the Influx of Criminals' Bill, and to repass the Convicts' Prevention Act, with such additional clauses as may be necessary to prevent the admission of convicted criminals from other colonies under any pretext, be now adopted, signed by the Chairman on behalf of the meeting, and that the Right Worshipful the Mayor be requested to present the petition in his place in the House: —

"To the Hon. the Legislative Council of Victoria, in Council assembled.

"The petition of the colonists of Victoria, in meeting assembled,

"Humbly showeth, — That your petitioners have learned with feelings of deep indignation, that a despatch has been addressed to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, by the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, which proposes to deprive the colonists of the protection of the Convicts' Prevention Act, and under the pretext of encroachment upon the Royal prerogative, suggests the letting loose upon the colony of a horde of daring ruffians, now undergoing punishment according to law.

"That your petitioners emphatically protest that the Sovereign of

the fact that one of the speakers, an eminent barrister at Melbourne, and lately a member of the Legislature, said

the British Realm neither hath nor ought to have any right, prerogative, or power, warranting the letting loose in the colony of Victoria of the convicted criminals of other countries or colonies.

"That your petitioners feel that the carrying out of Sir George Grey's suggestions will render the Royal prerogative odious to the colonists, and will seriously endanger the connection existing between this colony and the parent state.

"That your petitioners consider the Convicts' Influx Bill now before your House, a totally inefficient substitute for the Convicts' Prevention Act, its machinery being too cumbrous to render it easily workable, and the passport system it proposes to introduce being altogether unsuited to a British community, and repugnant to the principles of the British constitution.

"Your petitioners, therefore, pray, that in order to the protection of the colonists from further inundation with foreign crime, and in vindication of your own right of freedom of legislation, your honourable House will reject the Convicts Influx Bill, and re-enact the Convicts' Prevention Act, with such additional clauses as will prevent the introduction to Victoria of the convicted criminals of other countries or colonies, on any pretext whatsoever.

"4. That in the opinion of this meeting the conduct of Sir William Denison, in reference to the convict question, as particularly exemplified in his despatch to the Secretary of State, dated 15th March, 1854, deserves the strongest reprobation, inasmuch as he has not hesitated to seek a personal triumph at the expense of the legislative independence, peace, and future prosperity of Victoria."

The Melbourne Argus concludes its account of the meeting with the following remarks: —

"As the densely packed masses began to move away, the proceedings being now closed, three cheers were given for the Queen. Such a scene as that beheld from the rising ground in front of the Supreme Court House during the meeting we never before witnessed. The numbers of those present were variously estimated at from ten to fourteen or fifteen thousand persons. When in the act of cheering,

"that he had felt something like a burning blush on his cheek, on hearing the announcement in the Lieut.-Governor's address on opening Council, that the Queen contemplated presenting the colony with her portrait."

Never was a sentiment more universal or deep-seated in any people than that of hatred of the system of transportation throughout the great Australian colonies, and especially in Victoria. They met in great public meetings, appointed a delegate to England, raised a large fund to carry out their object, many persons contributing each 100*l.* They at last banded themselves into a common Australasian Anti-Transportation League. Yet the Anti-Transportation movement in Australia was officially described in Parliament as a *great sham.* The colonists, nettled at such language, ask naturally,—If you treat all our popular demonstrations, all our urgent appeals to the Queen's Ministers and to the people of England, as a *great sham,* what other means have we of proving that we are in grim earnest, except that of resorting to physical force, and taking up arms in self-defence?

In the House of Commons the other night, on Mr. Roebuck's motion for a Committee of Inquiry as to the State of the Army, Mr. Gladstone assured the House that there was a tribunal even higher than that of Parliament — that tribunal was PUBLIC OPINION.

the animation and earnestness of every one was very impressive. When a resolution was put, every hand was raised; those at a distance from the platform eagerly endeavouring to catch the Chairman's words. The silence and unanimity at the moment of passing a resolution struck us as being most imposing. The people now began to leave the spot, and the streets were again thronged in the same manner as they were half an hour before the meeting commenced."

A British colonial community is made of the very same materials as the English, yet in its case public opinion is contemned, slighted, or scornfully ignored, — sometimes till *too late*. The severance of the United States from the mother country stands, like a beacon in colonial history to warn all future ministers from arraying the prerogative against the palpable rights and interests of British colonists.

If any further argument were needed in deciding the question now agitated, it would be found in the fact that within a few months, under the new Constitution Act, Victoria is to be governed by an Executive, responsible to the Colonial Parliament. Now, how could any Executive hope to carry on the government, in the face of the opposition of the entire community on a matter of such vital importance? *

In a new country, the lands of the State are the capital of the state. The hope of obtaining some portion of them is the magnet which draws emigrants to its shores. The sale of these lands supplies funds to the public exchequer. The facilities or difficulties in obtaining a share of them, check or retard the stream of emigration, and indirectly regulate the rank, condition, and pursuits of the emigrants. Thus the disposal of the waste lands is the question of questions to a young colony, affecting its revenues, the rapidity of its settlement, the pursuits of its people, and the prosperity of all classes. At the same time it is a

* By the overland mail received while these pages are passing through the press we learn that Sir C. Hotham has yielded to the popular demands, and given the Royal Assent to a new Convicts' Prevention Act. (February, 1855.)

question involving such intricate relations that it demands the largest experience and most comprehensive views, so that one would have deemed it might wisely be left to the legislation of the statesmen of the mother-country, as requiring all their sagacity and foresight. It has been left to their legislation, and what has been the actual result? A question, in itself difficult and complex, has been rendered more obscure and embarrassed by partial legislation founded on erroneous data; by regulations crude yet complicated, repeatedly patched up to meet new requirements and original defects; by promises to particular classes, never fulfilled, and yet never repudiated. Clashing interests have been created, party strife and passion have been kindled; the settlement of the country has been obstructed, and all the difficulties of the local administration immensely enhanced. These are the actual fruits of Home legislation on the waste lands of the Crown in Victoria. The causes of this melancholy failure must be attributed: — 1st, to the difficulty of obtaining at the distance of 16,000 miles, accurate data or comprehensive views of a question in itself intricate, and involving conflicting interests; 2ndly, to the absence of all historical precedents calculated either to suggest plans or give warning of dangers; and lastly, and perhaps chiefly, to the perpetual changes at the Colonial Office, for no sooner has a Minister mastered the bearings of the question, and marked out his line of policy, than he is superseded by another, who has to begin at the A B C of the matter, and who in his turn yields his office to a third.

It is quite obvious that these perpetual mutations are far more detremental to the efficiency of the Ministry to

which is committed the rule of numerous colonies in all parts of the world, where new interests are ever springing up and requiring re-adjustment, than they can be to any department of the Home administration. And this consideration suggests that the administration of the colonies should be at least *shared* by a permanent Board of Control. The last four years have seen no less than *five* Cabinet Ministers successively holding the destinies of our colonies in their hands. To master the intricate questions submitted to their final decision would have demanded more time than the whole of the brief tenure of office of each of the last four of them. Hence matters affecting the vital interests of the colony, perhaps to all future time, must either be crudely and hurriedly patched up, and got out of hand, or else staved off to a more convenient season.

It is worth remarking that the most successful colonies in the southern hemisphere are just those which have sprung up spontaneously, like hardy indigenous plants in congenial soil; while those which have been planted with great care and cost, and afterwards forced like hothouse plants, have proved signal failures. Witness, on the one hand, Victoria, the first of British colonies, on which Britain has expended—nothing; and on the other, the colony of "Swan River," or the "Canterbury Settlement," in New Zealand,—a contrast highly suggestive and instructive. One may be aptly symbolised by "the tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought;" and the others by "the

heath in the desert, that shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

To return to the question the most important to the progress and prosperity of the Australian colonies, — that of the disposal of the Crown lands. When divested of extraneous matter it may be stated in a few words. On the founding of New South Wales, at the close of the last century, this portion of the Australian continent was occupied by scattered migratory tribes of a degraded and timid aboriginal race. They had no fixed dwellings and they cultivated no lands. It was soon discovered that the climate and soil were admirably adapted for pastoral pursuits. A breed of fine-woolled sheep was obtained and propagated. The sterile lands along the coast having been occupied, the settlers discovered a passage through the defiles of the Blue Mountains, which rose like a wall between them and the interior, and entered upon vast, grassy, well-watered plains beyond. The pastoral settlement of the country thenceforward received a fresh impetus, and rapidly developed itself. The wool, too, not only immensely increased in quantity but its value began to rise in the home-market. As the ancient Hebrew patriarchs roamed over the plains and valleys of Palestine and located themselves at their pleasure, so these early settlers, having pushed beyond the then limits of settlement, "took up" just what lands they pleased, appropriating as much as, on the most liberal allowance, could be needed for their flocks, asking leave of no man, and only respecting the claims of previous settlers. In this way many hundred leagues of territory were soon occupied by a scanty

European population. The settlers, from the mode in which they acquired possession, were called "Squatters;" a term which, to the English ear, may suggest ideas of a rugged, illiterate, gipsy-like class, but which, to the Australian mind, recalls very different associations, — the squatters being really the great territorial lords of Australia.

In the earlier years of the squatting dynasty every man did what was right in his own eyes. But as the country came to be fully occupied, and the value of the "stations" or "runs" became greatly increased, frequent disputes necessarily arose between conflicting claimants and neighbours; for the boundaries of property were ill-defined, and the only right to possession was that of pre-occupancy. As a cure to this evil, "Crown Land Commissioners" were appointed by the local government, each having a very extensive district assigned to him. These were to adjust disputes, and arbitrate between rival claimants. At the same time it was made compulsory on every squatter to take out a licence for the occupation of his run. The proceeds of this tax or rent went primarily to defray the expenses of the new establishment of commissioners; and the latter were to issue the licences yearly; 10*l.* being the cost of a licence. Every settler, however large or small his run might be, paid the same sum. This was the first step in legalising the squatters' possession of the "waste lands of the Crown." It arose out of the necessities of the case, and was clearly intended as a temporary measure, suited to the colony in its transitional state of partial settlement, and to be superseded when these "waste lands" should be required for the ordinary pursuits of industry. This provisional measure

has, under various subsequent modifications, subsisted to the present time. First, the rent to the Crown was equalised by making the licence-fee proportionate to the number of sheep depastured by the holder of the licence, at the rate of 10*l.* for every 4000 sheep. This was an evident improvement on the original measure. A more important change was next made, involving large concessions to the squatter. The runs had gone on increasing in value, and were bought and sold for considerable sums. The rent was wholly disproportionate to the benefits received, and the tenure being only for a single year, the occupants naturally sought to acquire a more permanent holding. Their representations at length took effect with the Home Government. Under the authority of an Act of Parliament, Orders in Council were issued, authorising the squatters to claim from the Colonial Executive LEASES of their runs. All the lands of the colony were divided into three classes, — the *settled*, or that around the towns, the *intermediate*, and the *unsettled*, — the latter including by far the largest part of the colony. In the *unsettled* districts the leases were to be for fourteen years, in the *intermediate* for eight years, while in the *settled* they were to remain, as before, for a single year. Provision was also made for renewing the leases under certain conditions. Another important point conceded to the squatter was the right of purchasing 640 acres, or a less quantity of his run, at the minimum price of Crown land in Australia, viz. 1*l.* per acre.

This was the second great step in consolidating and giving permanency to a practice which had first grown up by chance, and had afterwards been recognised by govern-

ment as a provisional and transitional arrangement. Its ill effects were soon visible. All who did not share the benefits of this liberal grant felt themselves aggrieved by it. The whole colony was split up into two classes. The first consisted of the squatters, to whom these vast territorial concessions had been made; the other comprised the bulk of the colonists, — but especially the land-owners, all of whom had purchased their possessions, and most of them at upwards of 1*l.* an acre, which was the minimum price of land. It was not, however, at first that the most mischievous effects of the measure became manifest. The equivocal wording of the Order in Council gave colour to the demands of some of the squatters that no part of their runs should be sold, not even to meet the growing want of agricultural lands. In deference to these claims the lands of the interior were for a long time altogether withheld: until very recently, they have been offered for sale only to a most limited extent, altogether disproportionate to the wants and wishes of the colonists. It is difficult duly to estimate the evils resulting from this niggardliness in placing the Crown land at the disposal of those who would purchase it. The competition at the public land-sales was so great that the small capitalist was debarred from obtaining any desirable allotment, and withdrew from the contest. Thus agriculture was checked, and the permanent occupation of the country by an industrious yeomanry seriously retarded, while encouragement was given to land speculations and jobbing. The towns became overgrown and overcrowded; and those who, under happier circumstances, would have invested their earnings in the purchase of land, now spent them in the haunts of in-

temperance and vice. The squatters, being considered the cause of these evils, were assailed with all the bitterness of party strife. Finally, the local government was so placed between the two parties that every one of its acts was regarded by one or the other as unjust and aggressive. Nor could it escape from the dilemma by a general revision of the Land Sales Regulations, for these were beyond its jurisdiction.

In the neighbouring colony of South Australia a different practice has obtained, offering greater facilities to the small capitalist for obtaining allotments of agricultural lands. The result has been that South Australia not only produces enough for her own consumption, but exports her produce largely to the sister colony.

These evils of the Victorian system have of late grown so great and so obvious that during the last two years the cry of "Unlock the lands!" has resounded from end to end of the country, — has become the watchword of political meetings, and even the theme of popular ballads, applauded by enthusiastic audiences. "Unlock the lands!" cried the Melbourne townsman, as he paid his half-crown for a cabbage, or handed over two or three hundred pounds to some "land-shark," for a few square yards of land in the suburbs. "Unlock the lands," echoed the gold-digger at Bendigo, whose eye now scarcely ever beheld the green produce of the garden, and who, weary of his gipsy-like, hugger-mugger, hand-to-mouth mode of life, longed for a hut and an acre which he might call his own. And then he remembered that he paid 18*l.** a year for digging on a

* This sum was much reduced about a year ago. It is now 8*l.* a year, or 1*l.* per month.

small patch, with the *chance* of finding gold there, and that to the opulent squatter was granted thousands of acres for 10*l.* a year. And he asked if this was even-handed justice? And next inquired why a large proportion of the Colonial Legislature should be returned by these squatters, while the 80,000 colonists in the Gold Fields should have not a semblance of representation in that assembly which levied the taxes and disposed of the revenues? No marvel that such considerations created a general discontent among the population at the mines, which consisted not of rude unlettered hinds, but comprised a full average share of thoughtful intelligence and self-respect.

During the last year (1854) the mischief has been much abated. Country lands have been offered much more freely for sale, and small allotments have been sold in the neighbourhood of the mines. But why this delay of three years in a measure so obviously demanded and actually clamoured for by the miners themselves? Why should a government, armed with immense revenues, be so much slower than private individuals in overtaking and adapting itself to the requirements of the new era in the history of the colony?

The squatters, who, with the aid of the Government nominees, have hitherto commanded a majority in the Legislative Assembly, are fighting hard to hold their own, and demand the issue of the leases promised in 1847. Their opponents (that is, the bulk of the colonists) denounce this issue of their leases as grossly unjust and impolitic. In the meantime both parties anxiously await the long-deferred decision of the authorities at home. The

chief points at issue are these, — 1st. Shall the leases be issued or refused? 2nd. The squatter claims to hold his run in entirety, or, if any portion be sold, to receive compensation for the same. Shall this claim be allowed? The latter is obviously a most important question. In support of his claim, the squatter refers to the *Magna Charta* of his class, the Orders in Council of 1847, which declare that, during the continuance of the lease, no part of the run can be sold to any other than the lessee. But, in reply, his opponent triumphantly points to these words introduced into the same Order in Council as a saving clause, and which would seem conclusive on the point: — "That nothing in these Regulations, or in any lease to be granted under the powers hereby vested in the Governor, shall prevent the said Governor or officer for the time being administering the government of the said colony, from making grants or sales of any lands within the limits of the run, or lands comprised in such lease, for public purposes, or disposing of it in such other manner as for the public interest may seem best, such lands as may be required for the sites of churches, schools, or parsonages; or for the construction of high roads, &c. &c.; or for the use or benefit of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country; or for public buildings; or as places for the interment of the dead; or places for the recreation or amusement of the inhabitants; or any town or village; or as the sites of public quays or landing-places on the sea coast, &c.; or for the purpose of sinking shafts and diggings for coal, iron, &c.; or for any other purposes of public defence, safety, utility, convenience, or enjoyment, or for *otherwise facilitating the improvement and settlement of the colony.*"

The truth appears to be this:—the framers of the measure never dreamt of so rapid an expansion of the distant colony they were legislating for; they conceived that the lands of the interior would not for many years be required for other than pastoral pursuits.* They therefore agreed to grant leases of these lands to the then holders. But anxious to guard against the possibility of this grant being made prejudicial to the interests of the country at large, they introduced the above saving clause, which they deemed comprehensive enough to meet every possible contingency.

The whole question has now become involved with so many intricate relations that, however decided, injustice must be done to some. It would be more equitable and wise to arbitrate, not on the technical grounds of verbal interpretation, but on the comprehensive principles of abstract justice, founded on a general view of the entire subject. As the colonists themselves are all more or less interested parties, they are disqualified from being fair judges. The home authorities need ample and accurate data to enable them fitly to arbitrate. Perhaps the most satisfactory course would, be to send out to the colony two or three able commissioners, who should inquire and report on the whole subject of the disposal of the Crown lands; and their report might afterwards be submitted to a Select Committee of the House of Commons, and the matter definitively set at rest.

The main question at issue between the squatters and the colonists is not the only subject of dispute involved in

* It is commonly said that the Order in Council was founded upon false statements made by interested parties.

the consideration of this patchwork Code of Land Regulations. Other anomalies and indefensible proceedings are legalised by these Regulations, and yet are so repugnant to common sense that the Government sometimes refuses to carry them out. Thus by one provision any large capitalist is empowered to select and purchase 20,000 acres of land within the Settled (or most valuable) Districts, at the rate of 1*l.* per acre. This is a double injustice,—1st, to the State,—for these lands are worth much more (perhaps ten times more) than 1*l.* per acre: 2ndly, to the squatters who happen to be located on the lands thus selected, and who in such cases are obliged to give up possession to the purchaser, who then resells at advanced prices. These anomalies clearly show the necessity for a general revision of the laws relating to the disposal of the Crown lands in Victoria.

CHAPTER XVI.

GEOLOGY OF THE VICTORIAN GOLD FIELDS.

Physical Geography of the Gold Districts — Granite — Metamorphic rocks—Quartz veins—Auriferous drift in gullies and on hill-tops—The "White Hills" — Lava Plains — Their relative age — Extinct volcanoes—Mount Lyell—Mount Aitkin—General conclusions relative to the Gold Fields — Their resemblance to the auriferous district of North Wales.

THE gold districts of Victoria, in the most comprehensive sense, form a broad zone stretching right across the country from east to west, and lying nearly midway between the southern coast and the northern boundary line of the colony. (See general map.) This region may be described as hilly rather than mountainous. Passing through it in almost any direction, the traveller comes alternately and successively upon, 1. Isolated granite hills, lightly sprinkled with scrubby timber. 2. Rocky ranges intersected by steep glens and gullies, and covered with thick forest; the gullies open upon river valleys, with grassy alluvial "flats." 3. Monotonous flat or rolling country, covered with gum-tree forests. 4. High table lands, destitute of trees, and cleft by rocky fissures from one to two hundred feet deep, through which run creeks or rivers. 5. Plains of rich arable land, out of which rise rounded, or steep and

rocky, isolated hills. Such are the characteristic features of the central or auriferous districts of Victoria.

These several peculiarities of configuration, vegetation, and external aspect are in each case to be referred to coincident differences of geological formation. So unequivocal, indeed, is the connection between the landscape of the country and its geology, that you may confidently pronounce upon the constituent rocks of a hill or range while still distant from it. The extreme simplicity of the structure of the country renders this vastly easier than in a region like our own England, where Nature has given us an epitome of her world-wide volume of rocky records in brief.

Having enumerated the several marked physical features of the auriferous regions of Victoria, we may place the coincident geological divisions in a parallel column, and describe them in the same order.

1. *Granite* occurs in detached mountain masses of no great extent or height, forming isolated hills (as Mount Alexander), rising with a long sweep to a serrated crest. Sometimes it forms one side of a hill while the slates abutting on it form the other. On the flanks and summits of such hills the granite rock protrudes in fantastic blocks, pillars, and "tors,"* or else peeps above the surface, forming vast tabular masses slightly rounded: this convexity does not result from weathering, but from the spheroidal structure of the granite itself, which is then commonly coarse grained, and peels off under atmospheric action in concentric scales or coats, varying from a quarter of an inch to

* See the Vignette, p. 1.

five or six inches in thickness. These hills sometimes rise out of an undulating granitic country, partially covered with the detritus of the adjacent mountains.

2. *Metamorphic Rocks.* — The most remarkable features of the gold-producing regions are those chains of rough, rocky hills, densely wooded, and intersected with steep gullies and ravines, distinguished by the colonists as the "ranges." In the gold districts, these ranges always consist of metamorphosed rocks, equivalents of the Lower Silurian and Sub-silurian or Cambrian formations in England and Wales. The series comprises clayslate, micaceous schist, red and yellow sandstone, quartz conglomerate, and other rocks. They occupy extensive areas around the granitic centres against which they are highly tilted. The structure and conditions of these ancient crystalline rocks, as developed in the gold country of Victoria, is singularly simple and uniform. The whole are cleft into beds or bands by a system of cleavage joints, running N. and S., and dipping nearly vertical. An extraordinary uniformity of dip and strike reigns over very large areas, strikingly contrasted with the complex irregularities observable in the contemporaneous strata of Europe. This cleavage structure is so strongly marked that it becomes difficult to determine the planes of stratification; and this difficulty is increased by the want of good natural sections, and the general absence of fossils. That these rocks are truly stratified is, however, proved beyond doubt; first, by the existence of regular series of broad beds of widely different rocks, amongst which is a conglomerate of coarse *waterworn* grains of quartz; second, by the very recent discovery of some Lower Silurian

fossils, as communicated in a letter by Mr. Selwyn to Professor Ramsay, and by him made public in the last number of the "New Edinburgh Philosophical Journal." The strike and dip of the strata appear nearly to coincide with that of the cleavage joints.

The discovery of these fossils establishes the geological age of the formation, which previously had only been surmised from its lithological resemblance to the synchronous rocks of North Wales and Cumberland and from the analogies of other gold districts. Mr. Selwyn has also established the very interesting fact that the granite of Mount Alexander sends out veins into these metamorphic rocks at the line of contact; proving that the granitic mass has been molten since the deposition of the schists.*

These ancient upraised and altered strata are more especially the sites of the rich gold deposits. The original matrix of the gold seems to have been, without doubt, wholly, or in great part, in the veins of quartz, which form their chief characteristic. These are very numerous, traversing the country from north to south, and dipping at a high angle. They vary from eighteen inches to six feet in width, sometimes thinning out as they descend, or uniting with other adjacent veins. They are traversed by nearly vertical joints, parallel to the walls of the vein; sometimes by a reticulation of irregular joints running in all directions. But besides these great *lodes*, the whole mass of the rocks is intersected by a complete network of smaller quartz veins, some not thicker than a wafer. These

* Mr. Selwyn has surveyed a portion of the Central Gold Fields for the Government of Victoria, and is still engaged upon the work.

run in all directions, and are so numerous that a single square yard of rock will sometimes present many of them.

It is well known that in most gold-bearing countries the quartz veins grow poorer as you descend; and it is concluded that that portion of them which has disappeared by denudation was much richer than what remains. I have sought but have never met with any evidence that such is the case with those in Victoria. Two quartz veins have been worked near Forest Creek; but I could not learn that these grew poorer as the miners got down deeper: the reverse seemed to be rather the case.

3. *Auriferous Drift.*—The ancient metamorphic slates and sandstones have undergone extensive denudation since the period when the country assumed its present general configuration. This is manifest from the vast accumulations of drift or alluvium in the existing valleys. The detritus of this or some previous epoch has been spread out over large areas around the higher hills, forming those tracts of monotonous rolling forest country before described. But these localities appear not to produce gold, or at least not to be worth working. All the rich deposits are found in or beneath drift accumulated in the valleys *within the limits of the ranges* themselves.

In short, the gold, after having been separated from its matrix during the gradual process of denudation and disintegration, appears never to have travelled far, but to have been deposited with the coarser detritus near the parent rock where it was originally generated, and from which it was, by the gradual grinding down of the matrix, slowly liberated. In its original position *in situ*, the gold occurred in *vertical* veins of hard quartz plunging down

deep into the rocks, and only to be got at by the most laborious operations of mining. In the gold alluviums Nature has accomplished this work for us, and has spread out her treasure in a nearly *horizontal* bed, beneath an accumulation of drift, from whence it can in most cases be obtained with comparatively little labour; though indeed this *drift* is sometimes concreted into a mass harder than granite, and of great depth, even to a hundred feet; and often the richest prizes lie buried beneath the most intractable rocks. Yet, on the whole, Nature has done more than three-fourths of the miner's work for him; has broken up, ground down, and sorted the matrix, and concentrated the contained gold within a narrow space; and thus much of the precious metal, which was scattered too meagrely through its parent rock to be worth the labour of extracting, is now available for man's use.

This local drift, from whence is extracted nearly the whole of the 100 tons of gold annually supplied from Victoria, occurs under three different conditions. (See Map, *fig.* 5. p. 225.) First, filling the bottoms of the valleys which intersect the auriferous "ranges." Where the valley opens the surface of the alluvium spreads into a fertile "flat." When the valley emerges from the rocky defiles those flats become continuous, and a quarter of a mile or more in width.* Such accumulations are usually from ten to forty feet deep. They consist of successive beds, in pretty regular stratification, of red and yellow clays, sand, and gravel of rolled pebbles of quartz and slate, such as might be found in the channel of a modern

* The view, Plate III., is on one of these flats.

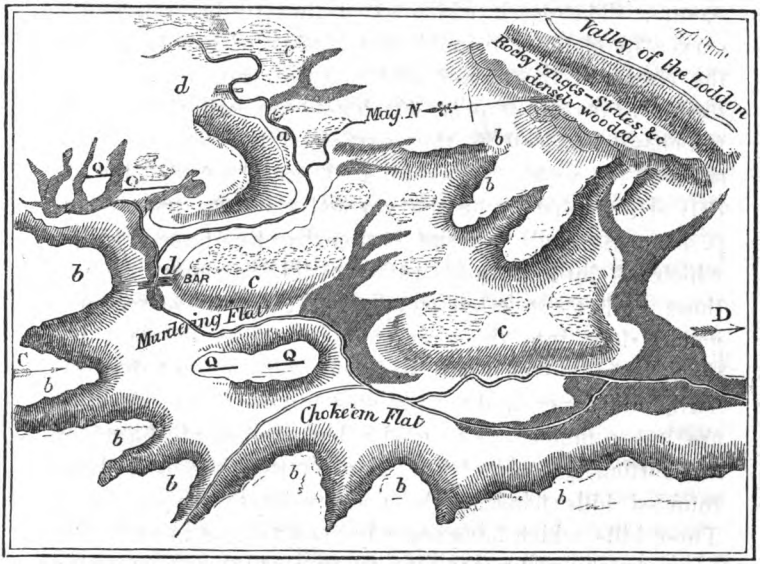


Fig. 5. Map of Part of Fryer's Creek Diggings, Mount Alexander.

Scale 2 *inches to a mile.*

Gully workings.

Hill workings.

a. Rocky ravine.
b. Steep rocky hills.
c. Rounded hills covered with drift.
d. Rocky bars.
Q. Quartz veins.

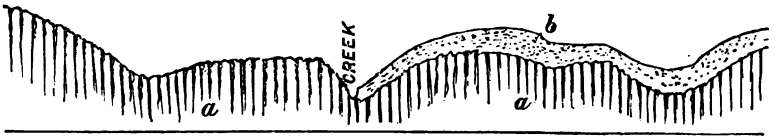


Fig. 6. Section from C to D on Map.

a. Metamorphic primary rocks.
b. Auriferous drift.

stream. The creek which at present drains the valley carves its channel through the surface of the drift; but the course of the *actual creek has no relation whatever to the line of deposit of gold*, which lies beneath the drift in the channel formed by the meeting of the opposite rocky sides of the valley, either on a "bottom" of pipeclay, or between the edges of the vertical slates.* (See *fig.* 1. p. 48.) Secondly, in the bottoms of the lateral gullies which fall into the main valleys. The inclosing sides of these gullies are often steep; but they descend with a gentle slope into the main valley.† There the drift has much the same character as in the flats, except that it is harder and dryer, and the rounded and water-worn pebbles are less common. The gold is here commonly found on a "bottom" of pipeclay. Thirdly, the gold-drift forms rounded hills flanking the main valleys (see *fig.* 5., *c.*) These hills, which have scarcely been noticed in published accounts, are perhaps the most remarkable and interesting objects on the Victorian gold-fields.

To the diggers they have proved treasuries of untold wealth. To the geologists they stand as silent witnesses to events which happened long anterior to the intro-

* When the diggers have sunk their shafts through the overlying beds of the drift in the valley bottom, they commonly meet with springs which are often too powerful for their pumps and buckets, and compel them to desist before they have proved the value of the ground.

† In a well-worked valley, where every little gully has been turned up, the "diggings" as seen from a commanding height have much the character of streams, red and yellow, winding down the gullies, meeting and expanding in the flats, and sweeping round prominent headlands of rock. This is shown in the view, Plate IV.

duction of our race on the globe, yet at this moment powerfully affecting the destinies of the southern hemisphere and of mankind. They suggest interesting questions as to the circumstances under which these golden deposits were accumulated, and of the agencies which effected the vast denudation of which, in the existence of such great deposits, we have unequivocal proof. We might have expected to find the auriferous detritus lying in the valleys and hollows; but here we see it cresting hills two or three hundred feet high. (See *fig.* 7.)

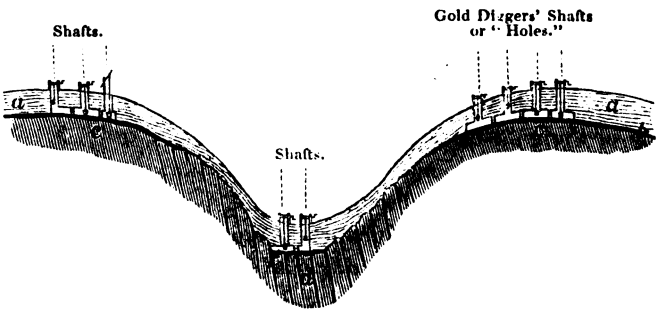


Fig. 7. Section through an auriferous gully, Fryer's Creek, showing the flanking hills covered with the drift.

Height of hills about 150 *feet.*

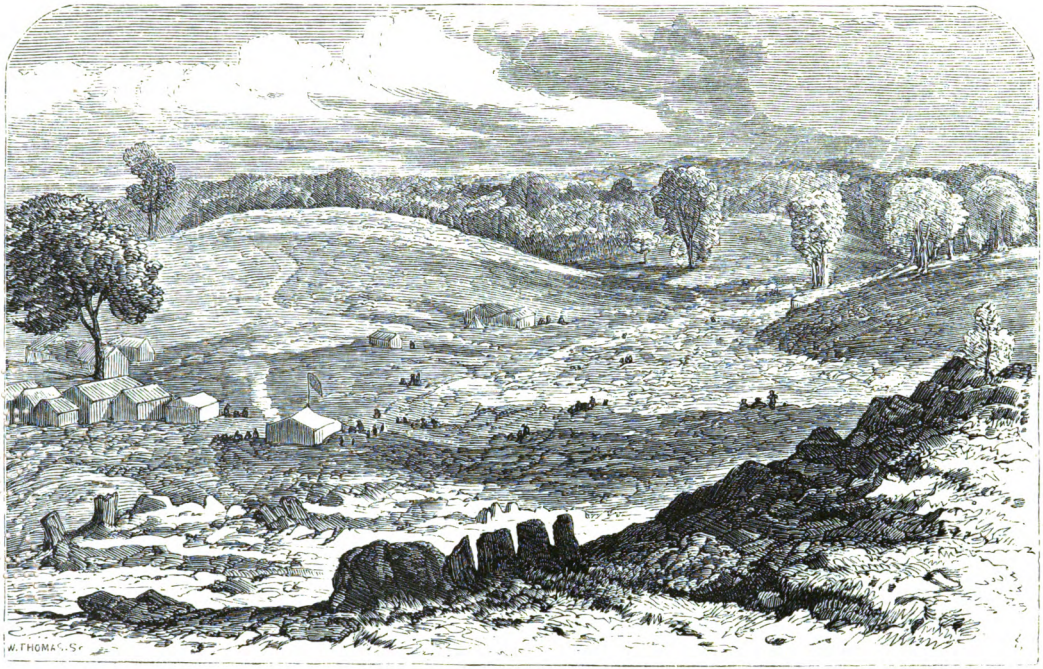
a. Irregularly stratified drift.
b. Gold bed.
c. Pipeclay.
d. Slates, Sandstones, &c.

Some of these hills have acquired great celebrity among the diggers under the name of the "White Hills" and the "Red Hills." They are found at all the chief gold fields in the central districts. The "Golden Point" at Ballarat, the first rich deposit discovered in the colony, is of this class. The first thing that strikes us is the re-

markable fact that they are always found on one side only of the valley, viz. the south or east side. This is the case at Forest Creek, at Fryer's Creek, at Bendigo, and, I believe, at Ballarat. They commonly stand at the junction of the lateral gullies with the main valley, or at the meeting of two valleys. They are usually detached on three sides, and on the fourth unite with the rocky slopes of the higher ranges in the rear or further back from the valley. In fact, they occupy and nearly fill up what would otherwise be a wide valley. But, as already said, they are never found on more than one side of the valley: on the opposite side, the rocky ranges, covered with little or no detrital matter, descend right into the bottom, generally much more precipitously than on the side of the gold-bearing hills.

On further examination of these singular elevations we find that the actual deposit of gold is usually on the flattish top of the hill (beneath the drift), and on the brow (see *fig.* 7.), yet *not all round the brow*, but that it is usually richest on those sides which face and seem to *look up* some opposite gully or some reach of the main valley. Thus the "Golden Point" at Ballarat stands at the junction of the River Leigh with a large tributary gully, and seems to look up the stream, which here makes an abrupt bend after uniting with the subordinate gully *, this, as well as the main valley having proved highly pro-

* The rich "Red Hill" at the junction of the Adelaide Gully with Forest Creek is another case in point. So also the hill on Fryer's Creek represented in Plate IV., which, however, is rich on the side looking *down* the stream.



VIEW OF MURDERING FLAT, FRYER'S CREEK, MOUNT ALEXANDER.

Illustrative of auriferous deposits on the alluvial hills, and in the gullies and flats.

ductive. The slopes of the hill beneath the crest sometimes yield a crop of gold within a few inches of the surface. The precious metal is then commonly mixed with gravel, and reposes on a thin bed of unctuous clay. But the golden deposit is generally again met with beneath the thick mass of drift in the gully below. The drift is thickest at the top, becomes shallower on the slopes, and again grows deeper at the base, as shown in *fig.* 7. The beds composing it are everywhere conformable to the surface.

There is a grand succession of these hills along the valley of Forest Creek. All of them have been worked, and the summits are covered with the upturned earth. On ascending to the higher hills from whence the eye ranges over the entire valley, they form conspicuous and remarkable objects in the landscape, — isolated, now entirely denuded of trees, with their bright yellow or white capping strongly relieved by the dark forested hills behind them, while a few white tents gleam on their summits and slopes.

The base or nucleus of each of these hills is either a rocky bar or promontory advanced out into the valley from the ranges in the rear, or else a great mass of pipeclay. On this foundation the hill is built up. On the summit the drift is from fifteen to sixty or seventy feet in depth. Here it is often very irregularly bedded, as though deposited by a variable eddy or current, or on a beach.* It consists of beds of compact red, yellow, and white clay, with interstratified layers of quartz pebbles, and gravel con-

* This is remarkably the case at the Golden Point, Ballarat, where the different colours of the clays, &c. render the fact conspicuous.

creted into a very hard conglomerate by red ferruginous matter or some other enveloping cement, which so effectually binds the whole together that, on being fractured, the pebbles are cleft as well as the matrix. Sometimes, as at Ballarat, fragments or boulders of this red ferruginous conglomerate are found with gold largely diffused through their mass. Large boulders of quartz, rounded by watery action, are sometimes found deep in the drift, weighing several hundred-weight*: but it is remarkable that gold is seldom or never met with in these boulders.

The existence of thick masses of irregularly stratified drift with boulders on the tops of hills 200 or 300 feet high demonstrates that the gold-bearing detritus is neither the mere result of atmospheric disintegration, nor has been deposited by insignificant streams such as now drain these valleys.

There is in the valley of Bendigo a series of six or seven "White Hills," similar to those above described, but distinguished by the abundance of quartz conglomerate and of rounded water-worn pebbles of quartz. The stratified drift is about 60 feet deep, and beneath lies a deposit of soft pipeclay with the lustre of satin, laminated vertically, and of unknown depth. There is a similar "White Hill" at Forest Creek. Such hills may consist of the detritus of quartz veins immediately adjacent. They generally yield very largely. The diggers have sunk shafts through the pipeclay to a great depth in search of "a second bottom," but without success.

The great masses of pipeclay which so often underlie the gold deposit on the hills and in the gullies form one

* As at Ballarat.

of the most characteristic features of the Victorian Gold Fields. What are their real nature and origin is an interesting problem. The pipeclay appears to be interstratified in broad bands with the slates and sandstones, and has, like them, a vertical cleavage. The most probable theory seems to be, that such masses are a portion of the fundamental rocks, which have here been altered by local Plutonic action. The gold is found in irregular patches, or pockets, on the surface of the pipeclay. At Ballarat the whole mass of drift and underlying pipeclay is traversed by vertical fissures, or cracks, stained with ferruginous matter; and where these crossed the auriferous stratum *there* was found a rich pocket of gold imbedded in a bluish clay. This fact shows that the position of the so-called alluvial gold must not be considered as solely due to the action of running water. If it had been, why should it be aggregated around these vertical fissures? Further: in the quartz veins it occurs almost universally in strings, threads, and small bunches. How, then, is it that in these alluvial deposits we so constantly find it in lumps or nuggets, varying from the size of a pea or bean up to masses 130 lbs. in weight? We must seek for some other agency capable of aggregating numerous small grains into large masses. The process is probably analogous to that by which flints and "balls" of ironstone are formed.* The nuggets themselves have not the appearance of water-

* Much light is thrown upon this interesting but obscure subject by the experiments of Mr. David Forbes, recently detailed to the Geological Society, in which he succeeded in artificially *foliating* various rocks at a heat below that of fluidity.

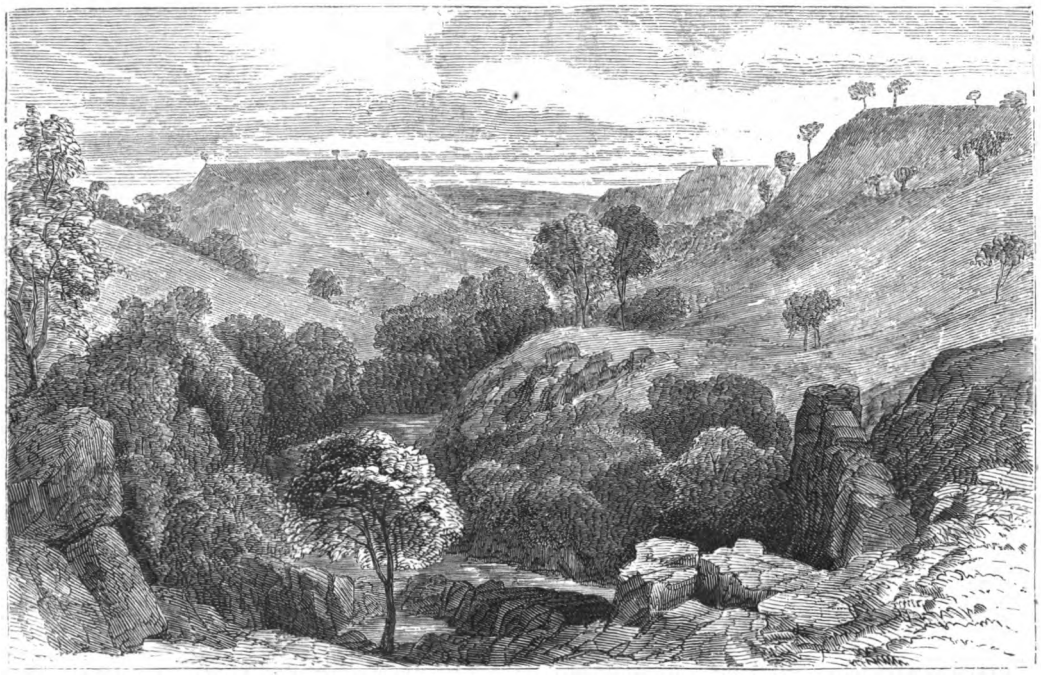
worn masses. Sometimes their surface is minutely wrinkled or chased.

4. *Basaltic Lava.*—In Victoria the trappean and volcanic formations merge into each other by such imperceptible gradations that it is often difficult to define their limits. When a deep section of a lava plain is laid bare it will sometimes happen that the upper portion is vesicular, while the lowest part of the mass is dense as an ancient basalt, the intermediate portion exhibiting a character between the two.

There are two kinds of lava plains in Victoria, and both are found in close proximity to the gold fields. In one the surface consists of a deep bed of rich black soil, out of which rise rocky knolls and ridges of a black vesicular lava, apparently protuberances in the original surface of the molten rock.* In the other, the hard basalt is covered with a thick stratum of tough clay, yielding a scanty herbage. It is in the latter especially that we find the remarkable undulations of surface called "Dead Men's Graves,"† resembling nothing so much as the graves of a vast crowded cemetery. The origin of these elevations and depressions, covering large level areas, is an interesting question. That they are connected with volcanic or igneous action seems certain from their being only found on such formations. That they do not result from *ordinary* volcanic action is also certain, as they are, in a world-wide view, rare phenomena. They are not found on isolated lava hills, but may often be seen on the

* As around Kyneton, north of Mount Macedon.

† See page 14.



VIEW OF A VALLEY AND CREEK NEAR THE RIVER COLIBAN, MOUNT ALEXANDER DISTRICT.

Illustrative of the Lava Plains of Victoria. The lava capping lies upon granite.

slopes of valleys intersecting lava plains. In this case they form parallel or diverging ridges, about eighteen inches high (reminding you of a newly-mown field), all of which follow the slope of the hillside, as streams of liquid matter would have done. This fact seems to hint at a solution of the enigma, and to suggest that the undulations and ridges are due to some original inequalities of surface, and might be referable to the flow of floods of half-congealed volcanic mud, such as is known sometimes to descend from Vesuvius, produced by water flowing over and mixing with volcanic dust, and termed "lava d'acqua."

The rivers and creeks which traverse these plains usually run in deep ravines or troughs, exhibiting sections through the compact lava from 50 to 200 feet deep, as shown in *fig.* 8. In a deep section the lower part of the mass sometimes assumes a columnar structure.

Fig. 8. Section across the Valley of the River Werribee; traversing the Lava Plains between Melbourne and Geelong.

The margins of such troughs are often somewhat higher than the plain. This circumstance is readily explained if we attribute the origin of the fissure to an uplifting movement from below, similar to that by which cracks or fissures have been produced during modern earthquakes.

When these basaltic plains are traversed by numerous intersecting valleys they are resolved into flat-topped hills with steep escarpments. Plate V. exhibits this character in a view of a picturesque valley near the river Coliban in the Mount Alexander district.

These vast tabular masses of lava extend over immense areas, and lie upon rocks of different kinds and ages. They circle round the sedimentary ranges, advance up between their spurs, and usually terminate abruptly with a steep scarp, forming, with the slope of the mountains, a trough, which often serves as the channel of a stream. The steep scarp no doubt represents the abrupt termination of the advancing lava current, and is explained by facts observed in modern eruptions in other countries.

Age of the Lava Plains. — The streams or rather sheets of lava forming these plains are probably to be referred to very different periods. That some are of a date subsequent to the formation and deposit of the auriferous drift might be inferred from several facts observable at the line of junction. Thus sometimes the level of the lava plain is higher than the lower slopes of adjacent metamorphic hills covered with quartz gravel. In other localities similar hills rise apparently *from under* the margin of a sheet of lava. But these indirect proofs are verified by a very recent letter from Mr. Selwyn, who states that the diggers are now actually in one place sinking shafts *through the lava* down to the auriferous drift beneath. It is certain then that streams of lava have been discharged subsequently to the deposit of the auriferous drift.

But it is equally certain that the date of other outbursts

of lava was not only prior to the deposit of the auriferous drift, but also anterior to the existence of those quartz veins out of whose detritus the drift is in part formed. For certain lava plains are intersected by massive quartz veins, similar to those which run through the rich gold-fields, and like those auriferous. Some of them at least yield the precious metal; for from such were obtained the first well authenticated gold obtained in the colony. These were worked in the spring of 1851, under the name of the "Clunes Diggings,"* and proved tolerably productive, even when wrought without any auxiliary mechanical power.

5. *Extinct Volcanoes.* — But besides these plains of hard, stony lava and basalt, there is yet another and very different volcanic formation adjacent to the gold-fields. North of the Ballarat district stretches a fertile undulating plain, sprinkled with clumps and groves, out of which rise numerous domical volcanic hills, either quite isolated or in pairs or groups, and from a mile to a mile and a half in circuit (see Frontispiece). These hills appear to have formed the volcanic vents of the district. The discharges here consisted, not of dense lava as in the plains, but of scoriæ and streams of light vesicular lava of a chocolate colour. Fragments almost as light as pumice lie on the hills. Sometimes they are twisted and curled. The soil of the hills and plain is a rich chocolate-coloured earth, and is formed from the disintegration of similar ejected lava.

* Clunes Diggings are on the Deep Creek, not very far from Mount Misery and the Pyrennees. There are four parallel veins here, 50 and 25 yards asunder; the intervening spaces are filled with a soft laminated earthy rock.

A few of the hills present traces of a vent on the summit. One about 200 feet high, which I named Mount Lyell after the illustrious expounder of volcanic action, has a small crater at the summit, which was said to be fathomless, but which I found on descending it to be not more than fifty feet deep, consisting of an upper cup or crater about fifteen feet in diameter, contracting suddenly into a shaft or well thirty feet deep and three or four wide. Both crater and well have rough, rocky, overhanging sides, as though they had been larger, but were in part filled by a stream of lava flowing over and *down* them. The lava is light and cellular, disintegrates rapidly, and probably dates from no remote period, for part of the original surface yet remains undecomposed. A stream of lava may be traced in its descent down the slope of the hill by the protruding rocks. In the wall of the crater there is a miniature trap dyke, about an inch wide, filled with a hard lava like that of the plains. This must have been injected from below, and have cooled slowly under pressure.

The rich volcanic plain out of which these "bald hills" rear themselves has numerous depressions, which, in the rainy season, form shallow lakes or lagoons. There are also two permanent lakes, the largest of which, Lake Barrambeet, is some miles long. It is remarkable that the bed of this lake was quite dry when the country was first colonised in 1838. A lake, however, has probably long existed here, for on the margin of the basin are cliffs of a kind of tufa. In 1851, it was seven feet deep.

In the neighbourhood of Lake Barrambeet is the isolated granite hill, Mount Misery; and grouped round its north-east base are several bald, domical, lava hills,

similar to those above described, standing like satellites to the majesty of the more imposing mass. This remarkable disposition suggests that the upheaval of the granite mountain and the volcanic discharge which gave birth to the adjacent lava hills may both be referable to one deep-seated elevatory power. At Mount Emu we have a volcanic vent breaking through a hill of granite, which is itself isolated in a vast sheet of basalt.

The volcanic district of Lake Barrambeet is continued westwards almost uninterruptedly 200 miles; but it soon loses its peculiar features. Instead of park-like woodlands and domical hills, we have then those monotonous, treeless plains so characteristic of this part of Australia; and out of the far-stretching piano rise numerous volcanic hills, with long sweeping outlines and craggy crests, like islands out of the sea.

Mount Boninyong, near Ballarat, an extinct volcano rising out of the Palæozoic strata, is unlike all these. It has a distinctly marked crater, broken down on one side; the soil is very rich, and the hill and crater are covered with a thick forest. Such examples are very uncommon in the colony.

The volcanic hills which rise out of the skirts of the great lava plains generally present no traces of the former existence of a crater at their summits, which consist of a sharp craggy saddle with a steep escarpment on one side, usually the south or east. In general aspect and outline they resemble Mount Radicofani between Florence and Rome. Mount Aitkin, on the northern skirts of the great Melbourne Plains, may be taken as a good example. Mount Aitkin is perhaps 2000 feet high, and is

the loftiest of the many extinct volcanoes which rise at the base of the Mount Macedon chain enclosing the Melbourne Plains on the north. It bears distinct traces of the form and flow of the lava streams which once issued from its summit. The crest forms in plan a flat segment of a circle. Here are several vents. Two streams which issued at the summit seem to have wound spirally down the mountain, one stream circling round outside the other, as shown in the plan and section annexed. (*Figs.* 9 and 10.). The commencement of each stream forms a crag (*v*) 12 or 14 feet high, that being the height of the stream above the surface of the saddle. The ridge or saddle does *not* appear to have formed part of the lip of a once entire crater. It is now partially grassed over as well as the steep sides of the mount, and both are roughened with rocky protuberances. The lava is reddish, soft, vesicular, and disintegrates rapidly into a rich earth.

I have described the character and aspect of the volcanic plains at the foot of Mount Aitkin in Chapter II. Mount Cotterell, in the centre of the plain, has all the character of a submarine volcano, rising to a height of a few hundred feet with a very long sweep.

A general review of the facts observed at the Gold Fields of Victoria leads to the following conclusions:—

1. The concurrence of plutonic, metamorphic, and volcanic rocks, appears a necessary condition for the existence of a rich gold-bearing district. The metamorphic rocks must be of the earliest Palæozoic period, or yet more ancient, and be abundantly traversed with veins of

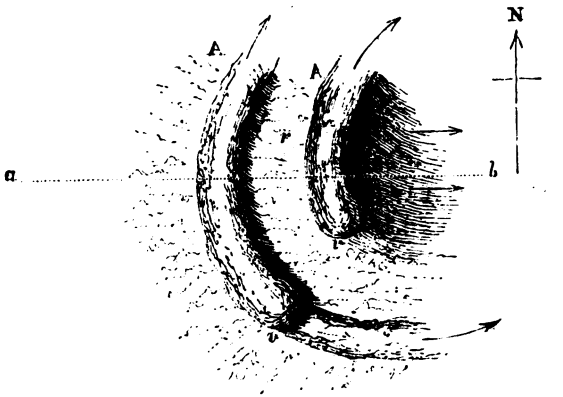


Fig. 9. **Plan of the Summit of Mount Aitkin,**
North of the Melbourne Plains.

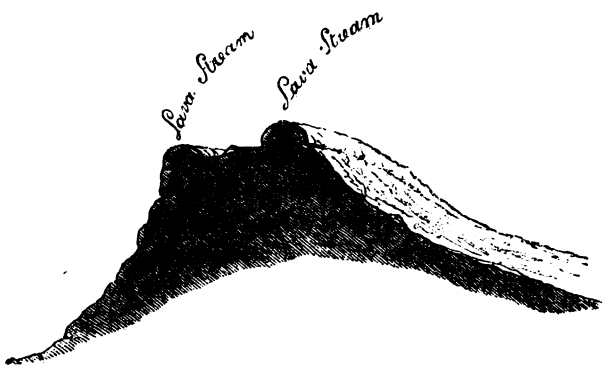


Fig. 10. **Section on line *a b* in plan.**

A. Lava streams, rising 14 feet higher than surface at *r*, and winding spirally down the mountain.
r. Rocky saddle, forming crest of mountain.
v. Highest point or commencement of lava stream, forming a crag 14 feet high.
The arrows indicate direction of lava streams and fall of the ground.

quartz. If the metamorphosm be incomplete the yield will not be abundant.

2. The gold originally existed wholly or in great part in the quartz veins, and has been liberated by denudation, not mere atmospheric disintegration.

3. This denudation was effected, not by insignificant streams such as now drain the auriferous valleys, but by powerful currents of water, capable of transporting boulders of quartz two or three feet in diameter, and of depositing thick beds of drift on hills 300 feet high; yet the same system of valleys existed then as now. Such currents were probably marine. They first carved out the valleys and then deposited the detritus, abraded from the adjacent rocks, in the hollows; also on the advanced bars or reefs, thus forming the alluvial hills which now border one side of the valleys. The gold sank to the bottom of the drift (while the latter was yet soft and porous), where it is now found, but was occasionally intercepted by a bed of very tough clay.

4. The deposition of drift on the tops of the lateral hills appears due to the eddies caused by the meeting of two currents, and to the check occasioned by the rocky bars now forming the nuclei of the hills. The gold is deposited on that side which faced up or down the current, or on the top of the bar. None is found towards the ranges in the rear of these advanced posts.

5. The gold now found in the chinks and fissures of rocky bars not covered with drift was similarly deposited; sometimes, perhaps, by the existing creek.

6. Some quartz veins are far richer than others. Bendigo and Forest Creek appear to have been enriched by one set of veins, running in the same line, but cut off

transversely by the granite of Mount Alexander. The auriferous quartz is of a cream colour, has a waxy lustre, is interveined with a light greenish talcose (?) clay, and sometimes irregularly traversed by joints filled with a ferruginous clay, yielding gold. Occasionally the gold is concentrated within a thickness of a few inches on one side of the vein, the remaining thickness being barren. The main quartz veins are from 18 inches to 6 feet thick. They occur both in the metamorphic rocks and in the adjacent great sheets of basalt which encircle the mountain ranges.

Resemblance to the auriferous rocks of North Wales.— There is a striking resemblance between the geological character of the Palæozoic districts of Victoria and that of North Wales, the latter, too, having recently proved auriferous to an extent not wholly insignificant. The chief points of difference are, that North Wales has comparatively few quartz veins, no alluvial hills bordering the main valleys, no quartzose gravel on the mountains, and no strictly volcanic products, though there is no lack of ancient trappean rocks. It is remarkable that the district in which the Dol-y-frwynog Mine (by far the most productive of any in North Wales) is situated presents yet more striking analogies to the Victorian gold-bearing rocks. A particular spot on a steep rocky slope close to the picturesque little river Afon-wen, which runs by the Dol-y-frwynog Mine, is still known as "the ruins of red gold," or "Merddyn Coch 'r aur."* It is a sort of mound

* This was first recorded by Professor Ramsay in his paper on this district in the Journal of the Geological Society, Aug. 1854.

or bank, and some fragments of charcoal lie at its base. The valley is at this point contracted into a gorge by an advancing spur, which might have caught and retained the particles of gold brought down by the stream; so that it is not improbable that the old Welsh name preserved the memory of an ancient alluvial working at this very spot. During the past year, 1854, several mines have been opened for gold in the neighbourhood of Dolgelly. The estuary valley of the Mawddach, between Dolgelly and Barmouth, much resembles some of the open auriferous valleys of Victoria, although in the latter the enclosing mountains are not on so grand a scale. Eskdale, in Cumberland, yet more closely approaches the character of the larger valleys in the Victorian ranges.

CHAPTER XVII.

DISCOVERY OF GOLD IN AUSTRALIA.

Existence of Gold in Australia predicted by Geology—Discovery of first rich Gold-field in New South Wales — In Victoria — First workings at Mount Alexander — Gold occasionally met with at an earlier period.

THE merit of a great invention can rarely be awarded unequivocally and indisputably to one individual: much more frequently it is claimed by several; and such is the case with the discovery of gold in Australia. As this matter has been much discussed, a few words respecting it may not be misplaced.

These claims are not all irreconcilable with each other. Gold has, in fact, been discovered in Australia by two different processes; first, *inductively*, by generalisations on geological data collected in various parts of the world; second, *practically*, either by remarking a resemblance in the aspect of a certain tract in New South Wales to auriferous districts in California, or by lighting on pieces of gold by mere chance.

To Sir Roderick Murchison, the explorer of the Ural gold regions, must be awarded the honour of having first announced to Europe that gold ought to be, and probably would be found in the local *débris* of what he called the

Australian Cordillera. Sir Roderick's conclusions were drawn from the observations of Count Strzelecki in New South Wales and an examination of the specimens brought home by the Count, illustrated and illumined by Sir Roderick's generalisations from his own observations in the Ural Mountains. This announcement, made in 1844 to the Royal Geographical Society, is a striking attestation to the uniformity of the operations of Nature in different and distant regions of the globe, and to the sagacity of the geologist whose prediction was thus remarkably verified.

Previous to this, however, though unknown to Sir R. Murchison, the Rev. W. B. Clarke, a geologist resident at Sydney, had expressed his belief that gold existed in considerable abundance in the schists and quartzites of New South Wales, and had actually procured in 1841 a specimen from the basin of the river Macquarie, which was exhibited to members of the Government at Sydney.

In the present case, however, the speculations of the philosopher were not destined to be fruitful in great results. Before a gold-field could really be opened it was necessary not only to inform the colonists that gold existed in the schists and quartzites, but to show *where* it was, and *how* they were to get it; and it was difficult, if not impossible, for any one to do this who had not visited and become familiar with actual workings elsewhere. Thus we find Mr. Dana, an intelligent American geologist, crossing one of the richest affluents of the Sacramento in 1841 without detecting gold, although he noticed the resemblance of the rocks there to those of gold-bearing regions. Doubtless, had he been acquainted from *actual*

observation with the mode of its occurrence in other similar auriferous tracts, he could have readily obtained some of the coveted metal from that now famous river. But in such matters reading in the library is no equivalent for working in the field.

The practical discovery and working of the rich gold districts of Victoria was the last link in a chain of events, the first of which happened in 1848, when the Californian miller espied the glittering particles in the new race he had formed for his mill in the Sacramento valley. Science had enunciated the existence of gold deposits in Australia; but the pick and the prospecting pan were the instruments destined to make them available to the world, and thus to revolutionise the Australian colonies: and this was effected without any knowledge of geological theories and speculations.

In the universal rush to the new-found treasures of California in 1848-9 Australia contributed its full share of adventurers. Amongst those who sailed from Sydney was Mr. E. H. Hargreaves, whose name has since become deservedly known to fame. Whilst at work at the Californian diggings Mr. Hargreaves was struck with the resemblance which the auriferous country there bore to certain districts he was familiar with in the neighbourhood of Bathurst in New South Wales; and he resolved at some future day to test the truth of his surmise that gold might be found there also. On arriving at Sydney on his return he at once set about carrying this resolve into execution; and, as he says, amid the jeers and ridicule of his friends, he procured a horse and other requisites, and set out on his exploring journey. At length, armed with

pick and prospecting pan, he reached the creek where he determined to commence his search, and to his great delight, in the very first pan of earth which he tried, after duly washing away the earth and gravel by the Californian method, he discovered a few particles of gold. He at once proceeded to make known his success to Government; and within a few weeks persons were trooping from all quarters to the new Dorado. The discovery not long after of the "hundredweight" of gold and quartz by a native, raised the excitement to fever heat, and it now spread like wildfire throughout the Australian colonies.

This was in the early part of the year 1851. Three or four years previously a large piece of gold had been shown at Melbourne, alleged to have been found in the Victorian Pyrenees; but the finder soon afterwards mysteriously disappeared, and the whole tale wore such an apocryphal air that it was hard to determine what truth, if any, was in it.*

Of course this story was now resuscitated, and gave rise to much speculation. Great was the eagerness to find the precious metal in Victoria; and this was kept alive and whetted by the fabrication of many tales of its being discovered first in one locality, and, when that proved to be a myth, then in another. In the country, many a keen eye was examining everything that glittered, and not a few employed themselves in hammering off pieces of the many quartz veins that cropped out in

* The locality where this was said to have been found, called Daisy Hill, has since been worked for gold with success. In the colony of South Australia gold had also been found in small quantities, some years before the opening out of the rich Victorian deposits.

the mountain ranges. The newspapers were filled with pseudo-discoveries; and sacks of glittering yellow mica were carefully and secretly conveyed to Melbourne; and samples, with much mystery as to the whereabouts of the rich locality, were then placed in the hands of those supposed to be learned in assaying, the inquirers being pretty confident that their sacks were filled with gold ore. These bubbles burst one after another, and then the truth began to reveal itself, and proved stranger than fiction. In June, 1851, a settler on on the Deep Creek, near the Pyrenees, proclaimed to the public the existence of gold in a quartz vein on his run, called Clunes, which had been discovered there two or three years earlier by the former owner of the station, Mr. Campbell, who had communicated the fact to two or three others, by all of whom it was carefully kept secret, lest a knowledge of it should prove prejudicial to their interests as flock-masters. Between one and two hundred diggers soon collected at this spot, and worked upon the veins with some success. It is remarkable that this first opened gold-vein was not in the auriferous districts properly so called, but traversed a mass of basalt; and there were no deposits of gold-bearing drift immediately adjacent, so that it could never have attracted a large mining population.

Not long after this a blacksmith resident at Boninyong, seven miles from Ballarat, lighted upon gold near his township. Diggers, with cradle and tin dish, soon gathered round the spot; but this, too, proved not very productive, and the miners, when threatened with the imposition of a Government licence fee, began to disperse, and

thus eventually discovered the rich bar at Ballarat, called Golden Point.

About the same time that the blacksmith was making his discoveries at Boninyong, a bullock-driver, who had been employed on a station near Mount Alexander, while exploring that district, hammer in hand, and examining every quartz vein that came in his way, at length was rewarded by finding the object of his search in a ravine not far from the afterwards renowned Forest Creek. I happened to be making a geological tour in that part of the colony at the time, and my attention was directed to the new discovery by a settler who resided in its immediate neighbourhood. With some difficulty I found out the spot indicated. It was a wild, secluded little rocky glen in the heart of the thickly wooded ranges on the west side of Mount Alexander. I found there two or three tents and a cradle. Two quartz veins had been tried, and some fragments which had been struck off with a hammer, containing visible specs of gold, lay on the ground near one of them. Nobody was at work here, for the men were gone to procure provisions at the nearest township, which was about twenty miles off. Women were taking care of the tents. Such were the feeble beginnings of a movement which was destined shortly to attract thousands to the Australian shores, to carry off the surplusage of British labour, to give an impetus to the trade of the world, and to be the grand agent in conveying European civilisation into the lands of the South Pacific. This spot is now known as "Specimen Gully." Similar quartz veins were abundant in the district: the hills were white with quartz gravel, and all the character-

istic features of a gold-bearing country were present over a large area. I at once saw that the discovery was probably pregnant with great results, and forthwith communicated with the Lieutenant-Governor on the subject. I afterwards met the man who had discovered the vein. one Wylie, and asked what clue had guided him to it. He replied that, having read in the newspapers that gold was found in quartz, he had been going about through the ranges, breaking off pieces from the quartz veins, till he found one with gold in it.

This happened in the beginning of September 1851. A few persons gradually gathered round the first party. Some of these passed over into the neighbouring valley of Forest Creek, to search there for auriferous veins; (for they still conceived that gold was only to be found in quartz;) and, while trying the nature of a vein close to the creek, they accidentally lighted upon an alluvial deposit, where, of course, the precious metal was obtained far more readily, as well as more abundantly, than by breaking up the quartz veins. Within a month after this discovery Forest Creek was alive with diggers, tents, and cradles; and, by the end of October some thousands were congregated there, and the banks of the stream searched throughout almost the whole length of the valley to its junction with Campbell's Creek. The first rich bar at Ballarat had by this time been worked out; and now the road thence to Mount Alexander presented one continuous stream of drays, carts, and pedestrians, laden with their "swags," toiling along, allured by the glowing accounts of the treasures that were daily being discovered at "The Mount." At the end of October gold was

found at Bendigo. And thus within four months from the rocking of the first cradle, the three richest gold-fields in Victoria and the world were discovered by the few scattered dwellers in the Bush. The first account of the geology of the gold-fields of Victoria was given in a paper by the author, transmitted to the Geological Society of London, and published in the Society's Journal for February, 1853.

Such are the chief facts connected with the history of of the discovery of gold in Australia. But there are traditional stories of an earlier period which late events seem to authenticate and explain:—how that many years ago a convict in New South Wales, who had been stationed up the country, was severely punished for having a lump of gold in his possession, which he stated that he had *found*, but which every one else then believed to have been stolen sovereigns melted down; and how, too, a certain shepherd, living near Bathurst, used, year by year, to bring down to the capital pieces of gold, obtained no one knew where, which he offered for sale to the jewellers of Sydney, taking care never to divulge his secret.

APPENDIX.

Two Despatches from Sir Henry Young, Lieutenant-Governor of South Australia, to the Secretary for the Colonies, giving an Account of the first Steam Voyage up the River Murray, to a point 1450 *Miles from the Sea.*

"On board the Lady Augusta Steamer,
River Murray, from the sea distant 1300 miles.
Swan Hill, September 17. 1853.

"My Lord Duke, — I have the honour and gratification of acquainting your Grace that the project of the steam navigation of the river Murray, the promotion of which has never ceased to engage my attention since my arrival in South Australia, has thus far been prosecuted with perfect success.

"The distance from the river Murray terminus, near the sea, at the Goolwa, in South Australia, to as far up as this place, is now ascertained to extend to an easily navigable course of 1300 miles. The wool with which this steamer is now about to be laden is only the commencement of a large future carrying trade, beneficial to the greater part of the extensive continent of Australia. Under these circumstances, I beg leave to make known to your Grace the conclusions at which I have arrived, after personal observation, in regard to the further measures it would be politic to adopt, in order to promote the colonisation of the vast basin of the Murray.

"I am the more strongly induced to make this communication to your Grace without delay because of my conviction that the adoption of similar measures in the provinces of Victoria and New South Wales

is calculated to impart to the plan for turning to profitable account the great internal water system of Australia, a unity and completeness which cannot fail to make it conduce to the greater prosperity and the more rapid progress of each of its separate colonies, as well as to redound to the honour of Her Majesty's service, and the advantage of our fellow countrymen in Great Britain. As respects measures actually progressing towards completion, I have briefly to state that the connection of the river Murray terminus, styled the Goolwa (a designation applied to it by the aborigines at Encounter Bay), with the sea at Port Elliot, will immediately be effected by an animal-power iron tramway of only seven miles in length. The tramway connects the river at the Goolwa with Port Elliot, and is laid on jetties at both places. At Port Elliot there are means of supplying fresh water to the shipping, and the anchorage is furnished with moorings for large ships. These improvements will have cost the local Government 23,000*l.*, in addition to 6500*l.* which will probably become payable from the same source as premiums for the introduction of river steamers.

"The observations which I personally made in 1850 of the sufficient breadth and depth of the waters of the Murray, from the sea across Lake Alexandrina, up to its junction with the river Darling, were corroborated by Captain Cadell, in his adventurous and more extended voyage from this spot to the sea in 1852.

"I am at this time on board of the Lady Augusta steamer, of forty horse-power, having in tow alongside a barge called the Eureka. Each vessel is 105 feet in length, with a united breadth of forty-two feet; and under Captain Cadell's able command and guidance, we have found a most ample depth and width of water throughout the long extent of course which we have just accomplished, without encountering any 'rapid' or obstruction of any kind. The breadth of the river has averaged 200 yards; the soundings not less than three fathoms. After reaching the junction of the Wakool, 1150 miles from the sea mouth, the bends of the Murray become more frequent and sharp; the width, but not the depth, decreases, and the snags require more than ordinary attention.

"The banks of the river abound in timber, and our fuel has been cut and taken on board on planks from the steamer, communicating

with the land almost as conveniently and securely as if wharfs or jetties had existed. The average depth of channel through Lake Alexandrina was seven feet. Whether the river can be continuously navigated at all times throughout the year as easily as at the present season, is a point to be resolved only after longer acquaintance with the periodical changes to which it is subject; but I have no reason to question its navigability by vessels propelled by steam during eight months at least of every ordinary year. From present and previous opportunities of observation and enquiry, I can bear testimony to the great natural advantages possessed by the extensive tracts of lands which are drained by the Murray river.

"Considering, therefore, the importance of facilitating the location on its banks of persons whose industrial pursuits would be promoted in connection with the carrying trade of wool, and the return supplies to the stockowners; considering, too, most especially, the probability that large numbers of British emigrants, whether intending in future to settle in Victoria, New South Wales, or South Australia, are likely to be attracted to the vast basin of the Murray when its navigability by steamers shall become known, and it is found to be a most convenient route to the gold-fields,—I have come to the determination at once to submit to my Executive Council, on my return to Adelaide, the expediency of proclaiming the lands on both banks of the river within the bounds of South Australia, to the extent of two miles, to be the 'Hundred of the Murray in South Australia.' Surveys of villages will be made in select spots as traffic and population require, and roads leading to and from the river will be reserved for public use, and as means of access to the back lands; whilst the alluvial flats, subject at present to periodical inundation, may, by embankment, be rendered perfectly available. These flats extend, on an average, from about half a mile to three miles in depth; and generally the banks afford building sites of sufficient elevation to be beyond the reach of floods. Under the arrangement above described, the lessees of the waste lands (which are, in South Australia, open by law at all times to purchasers by public auction) will sustain an abstraction from the very large extent of their runs for pastoral purposes too insignificant to be detrimental to their special pursuits, yet sufficient to give the owners of small allotments the space of pasture necessary to the suste-

nance of the live stock indispensable to their agricultural and dairy purposes, and other objects of domestic utility. The location of a population on the banks of the river will give to the squatters such facilities for obtaining labourers that the pastoral objects to which, for many generations yet to come, the immense tracts of the back lands of the Murray district are destined, may be extended rather than restricted or interrupted by the appropriation of the alluvial margin of the great river to the settlement of freeholders. I subjoin a list of the reserves already made by the Government of Sydney; it is probable that other reserves have also lately been made by the Government of Melbourne; for to both I took the liberty of suggesting that reserves should be made at intervals of one hundred miles apart, to afford facilities for the promotion of villages at spots likely to be convenient places of call for the river steamers. But my subsequent observation leads me to prefer the plan of continuous frontage reserves along both banks of the river, as necessary to the population which may be expected in future years to occupy this district. I am led to suppose that on the reserves in New South Wales and Victoria there is no right of commonage to the purchasers of allotments. The concession of a commonage in the Hundred of the Murray in South Australia is, however, as I am advised, essential to the early colonisation of the banks of the river. The reserves in Victoria and New South Wales to which I have above alluded, are first, Mooruna, forty miles south of the junction of the Darling with the Murray; Moorgiung, at the junction of the Darling and the Murray; Golgol Creek, Cottrary, Judallid, Euston or Nowong, Lake Talla, Swawill, Tettam, Woimby, at the junction of the Murrumbidgee with the Murray; Balranald, on the Murrumbidgee; Lake Waldarah, and Swan Hill. At all these places the extent of the reserve is ample; but I trust that the repeal of the Land Sales Act of Parliament will not take place until after reserves of water frontage throughout the entire course of the Murray shall have been made in Victoria and New South Wales, to secure to intending British emigrants the same facilities for settlement as are thus proposed by me to be afforded to them in the colony of South Australia. Reserves of water frontage on the banks of navigable rivers, like reserves on the sea coast, are objects of such recognise public utility, that an omission to create them would, I believe, be an

exception to long established custom; and in the case of so immense a water system as is the basin of the Murray, the omission to make very continuous reserves of frontage could not but be a lasting injury to Her Majesty's future subjects in Australia.

"The river is much fuller than it was at this season three years ago, when my first voyage was made; and favourably impressed, as I then was, with its great extent and depth of navigable course, my view of the country adjacent to the banks was necessarily more circumscribed (from the little height of the small boat in which I then travelled) than has been the inspection which I have now been enabled to make, as well by land as also off the house or 'hurricane' deck with which this steamer is furnished; and I am happy to say that my early favourable impressions have been much extended and strengthened.

"The runs are generally reported to be capable of supporting double the present number of sheep, now reckoned up to this place to exceed 400,000 on the Murray, exclusive of its numerous affluents; and the facility for the transport of the wool, and the import of labour and other supplies, which steam navigation of the river will now afford, is naturally regarded by the sheepowners as a strong and immediate inducement to them to increase their flocks. Wool from the Murrumbidgee will be shipped by the steamer this voyage. The Darling river, now stocked with 50,000 sheep, is capable of feeding at least 250,000. Many extensive tracts on the Murray and the Lachlan, now used by cattle, will most probably in future be occupied by sheep; and, on the whole, I am confident that the produce of wool in Australia is about to be very considerably and rapidly augmented by reason of the steam navigation of which this voyage is the commencement. The transport of wool to Melbourne by land has hitherto been effected by a long overland journey, occupying never less than three months, at a heavy expense, and is made so unsatisfactorily and irregularly that the wool-clip of one season is frequently compelled to remain over to the next. The receipt of supplies is equally dilatory; and licensed runs are left unused or are imperfectly stocked, and fresh occupancies of land for pastoral purposes are discouraged by impediments which this steam navigation will remove. In several instances, the drays despatched to Melbourne with last year's clip have not yet come back to the station with the return supplies. Although it would not be

safe for strangers to navigate the river Murray by night, the conndence which Captain Cadell's former exploration has given him has enabled him to persevere in our present voyage occasionally even amidst the darkness of moonless nights. We entered the Darling at its junction with the Murray, 700 miles from the Goolwa, at half-past eleven o'clock P.M., with full foresail and full speed of steam — an auspicious event, perhaps unprecedented in the first exploration by steam of a river with so prolonged a navigable course. Among the forty-five who compose our number are several well qualified to judge of the extent and value of the navigation accomplished on the present voyage. Their nationalities, professions, and interests are so various that, being on this subject unanimous, their opinions may not unreasonably be considered conclusive. They comprise English, Scotch, Irish, and American. Three are members of the Legislative Council of South Australia; two others are reporters of different Adelaide newspapers; some are familiar with the river navigation of the United States and California; one is an Adelaide merchant of experience and intelligence; another is an engineer of the name and, I believe, family, of Napier, well known among the scientific constructors of steam-engines. The carpenter has been brought up in the workshops of Vanderbilt, the eminent builder of steamers at New York; and, lastly, Captain Cadell, who, stimulated by aid from the Local Government of South Australia, is devoting his valuable time and experience, and all his own pecuniary resources, to the steam navigation of the Murray, appears to me to be singularly well qualified to cope with this great enterprise, to appreciate its importance, and to give it all the development it may require; and my cordial wish and expectation are, that his exertions will prove no less remunerative to himself than advantageous to the public interests. The quantity of wool to be river-borne to the sea by Captain Cadell in 1853, amounts to 4000 bales of from 200 to 250 pounds weight each; and there can be no doubt of the exports of South Australia, the produce of the river Murray, attaining in future years a further considerable augmentation. Besides the production of wool, it is very probable that the cultivation of the vine, of corn, and of maize could be carried on in the district of the river Murray in localities adapted to these products; whilst the flooded lands could be converted into rich meadows

or be made to grow rice; and steam saw-mills might be profitably employed in rendering the red gum and pine timber available to be rafted down for sale.

"The crews of the Lady Augusta and Eureka, besides Europeans, include three aborigines of South Australia, one native of China, two of India, and two South Sea Islanders.

"In conclusion, I beg to report that I have thought it right to forward copies of this despatch to the Governors of New South Wales and Victoria; and I address it to your Grace from hence, *viâ* Melbourne, because it is thus likely to meet with an earlier opportunity for transmission than if it had been postponed until my return to Adelaide, where I expect to be in the course of the next few weeks.

"H. E. F. YOUNG.

"His Grace the Duke of Newcastle."

"Adelaide, 15th October, 1853.

"My Lord Duke,—With reference to my despatch of the 17th ultimo, I have the honour to state that the steam navigation of the river Murray, described in that despatch, was further continued to Gana Warrah, 150 miles beyond Swan Hill. At this point the depth of water was three fathoms, and the breadth about 200 yards. From hence the descent of the river was commenced, because so much wool was already waiting transport, that Captain Cadell had no commercial object in prolonging the voyage on this occasion, although his information warranted the belief that the navigation could be extended, with equal safety, to Albury, within 400 miles of Sydney.

"The branch of the Murray called the Wakool was ascended for a distance of sixty miles, and was found to average forty yards in width, and the soundings were from two and a half to upwards of five fathoms.

"Near Poon Boon, on the Wakool, there is a reef of sandstone, but leaving a channel just large enough to admit the two vessels to pass abreast in six feet of water, after which the water assumes its average depth. The reef is capable of easy removal, and the agent of the Royal Australian Bank or Company (owners of the station)

expressed his intention to effect its removal before the next visit of the steamer.

" The total extent of the navigation of the Murray proper, accomplished on this voyage, was 1450 miles; that of its branch, the Wakool, sixty miles in addition. It is to be noted that very generally the river is so winding that the distance in a direct line by land may be computed at less than half the distance by water. On the whole I am enabled to give it as my opinion that the Murray proper is navigable from the Goolwa to Albury, that is, for a space of 1900 miles. Its branches and tributaries are the Wakool, the Loddon, the Campaspe, the Goulburn, the Kyaltie or Edward, the Tuppul, and the Billibong. The Murrumbidgee, from its junction with the Murray, has a navigation course of 700 miles to Gundagai. The Darling is navigable in seasons of flood; but to what distance is soon to be ascertained, I trust, by Captain Cadell.

" On the banks of the above waters there cannot be less than one million and a half of sheep, and numerous herds of cattle and horses. The runs are in all cases inadequately stocked, and much country, especially on the Darling, is not yet stocked at all.

" The timber and soil may be described as consisting of two distinct kinds. The timber is either of gum and the varieties known as box and peppermint on flooded or alluvial land, or of pines, either on hilly land or on land never subject to inundation, and characterised by a sandy or red loamy soil. The gum timber is fit for the heavier parts of shipbuilding, and for dwelling or storehouses. Sawmills may be expected to convert this timber into boats and rafts adapted to the river navigation, and into vessels (to be decked and sparred at the Goolwa — the river terminus) for disposal in the neighbouring colonies; whilst the timber of rafts broken up at the Goolwa would meet with ready sale. It is also not improbable that the mineral wealth known to exist on the Murray will hereafter afford dead weight for the cargoes of wool to be shipped at Port Elliot. A great passenger traffic may be expected to the gold diggings, since they may be reached by way of the Loddon, within thirty miles of Bendigo; and the Goulburn, from the Murray, more easily than from Melbourne.

" The route from Europe, *viâ* Port Elliot and the Murray, avoiding the dangerous navigation of Bass's Straits and Port Phillip Heads,

would be the most convenient route for emigrants, not only to the diggings, but also to the interior of the three colonies — of South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales.

" As respects the soil on the banks of the Murray, I would observe that the red loamy soil on which the pine timber flourishes seems best adapted for immediate cultivation of cereal products, and of the vine and olive.

" Fine vegetables, melons, and pumpkins of enormous size are grown in the little gardens of the squatters. The flooded lands (invariably alternating with the red soil) require embankment to adapt them to cultivation, and, in their natural state, afford the finest pasture in those seasons when the feed for cattle and sheep is scarce on the back lands. The river abounds in fish of several kinds, of which the Murray cod, weighing sometimes seventy pounds, is not only the biggest but the best. The mallaway, a species of cod, furnishes useful isinglass and good oil. The lagoons and backwaters of the river teem with crayfish, and are the resort of innumerable wild fowl.

" The aborigines are few in number and generally well conducted, and also well disposed to undertake work for which they are fitted, and are, to a considerable extent, actually employed in most of the avocations usual on sheep and cattle stations.

" The climate is of the same salubrious character as that for which the other more settled parts of this great continent are so justly celebrated. From the end of August to the 14th October instant, rain fell on twenty-two days, and the mornings and evenings were rather chilly, with heavy dew.

" As regards soil, climate, and other natural advantages, there can be no doubt that the vast basin of the Murray, equal in area to seven Great Britains, is well adapted to sustain a large population; whilst in no part of the world can the extent and facility of internal communication by water be surpassed.

" The first townships now in connection with the navigation are necessarily at the terminus of the river — the Goolwa; and at Port Elliot — its seaport in Encounter Bay. At the junctions of the rivers, and at the highest points of their navigable waters, other townships may be expected to spring up in the course of no distant time.

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"The anchorage for river boats at the Goolwa is between the north shore of the Murray and Hindmarsh Island, and forms a capacious and perfectly land-locked basin, with the depth of sixteen feet water off the end of the jetty; which jetty is connected with another at Port Elliot by an iron tram of seven miles, now on the point of completion, over a dead level country; thus conveniently obviating altogether the dangers of the sea mouth of this important river.

"The Goolwa, in position and shape affected by the configuration of the opposite shore of Hindmarsh Island, may be expected, from its natural advantages, to progress, as the Crescent City of the Australian Mississippi.

"On the 14th instant, I had the satisfaction of arriving alongside the jetty at the Goolwa, with the first cargo of river-borne wool, amounting to 440 bales, the produce of the pastoral districts of the rivers Murray, Darling, Murrumbidgee, and Wakool.

"An address was presented to me at the junction of the Murray with the Darling, by such of the settlers on the river, in the colonies of Victoria and New South Wales, as could conveniently communicate with each other at the time of my voyage. I annex a copy of the address, as showing the appreciation of the value of the enterprise of the local Government of South Australia by those who are the earliest and most immediately affected by it; and I trust that the recognition of my exertions to promote the opening up of the navigation and commerce of the great river Murray, now first successfully accomplished, will be interesting to Her Majesty's Government, with whose sanction, despite conflicting local views, I have devoted myself to this important work for some years past.

"H. E. F. Young.

"To His Grace the Duke of Newcastle."

State of the Labour Market at Melbourne in October, 1854.

I have referred in the text to the high prices paid in Victoria for skilled and other labour, and expressed an opinion that it is improbable these prices will suffer any great reduction for some time to come. Statements of a very different tendency have, however, recently appeared in English newspapers, such as would lead the reader to suppose that there was already a glut of labour in the Melbourne market, and that the position of the artizan would shortly be little, if at all, better there than in the old country.

The truth is, that owing to the immense increase in the domestic and trade buildings of the two principal towns during the last two years, and to the recent commercial depression, the excessive demand for skilled labour has somewhat abated of late at Melbourne and Geelong. When we add to this the fact that the colony is rapidly outgrowing the abnormal state of feverish excitement which followed the gold era, we need not wonder that the extravagant rates of 1852-53 have suffered some little abatement,—an abatement in harmony with the reduction in house-rent and the prices of the necessaries of life. The artizans of Melbourne, however, would not submit to this reduction without an effort, and they formed an association for the protection of their interests. Those who complained that they could get no work, on being offered employment on the roads, at which they could earn from 10*s.* to 15*s.* a day, said that they thought such work degrading to them; to which the President of the Government Road Board replied that colonists, to be successful, must be prepared to adapt themselves to the circumstances of the country; that no one had worked harder with his hands than he had; and that had he not done so, he should not have then been in a position to address them. However, this check to the demand for labour, such as it was, seems already to have passed away; and when it was found that some surplus of labour existed at Melbourne and Geelong, the smaller towns, in the coast and inland, lost no time in expressing their eagerness to avail themselves of it.

As it is highly important, both to the colonists of Australia and the artizans of England, that correct impressions relative to this subject should be largely diffused, I make no apology for appending a few extracts from the most recent advices from Melbourne touching the state and prospects of the mechanic, and the condition of the labour market generally at Melbourne in the month of October, 1854. The extracts which follow are from the leading daily paper of Melbourne, the *Argus*, of October 27. 1854. The statements in this journal are prepared with care, and are worthy of confidence: —

"MELBOURNE LABOUR MARKET.

"Thursday, 26th October, 1854.

"The prices of labour, which have been fluctuating during the last four or five weeks, appear now to have settled themselves down to the rates enumerated below. General employment has been slack, but is now somewhat more brisk. At this time of the year hirings for the busy season of the agricultural trade may be said to commence. For the skilled mechanic in all branches of the building trade, wages appear to have settled down to from 20*s.* to 25*s.* per day, and employment is decidedly more plentiful for both skilled and unskilled labour.

"Female servants are more plentiful.

"With rations: — Married couples, without family, 80*l.* to 100*l.* per annum; ditto, with family, 70*l.* to 75*l.* ditto; shepherds, 40*l.* to 45*l.* ditto; hutkeepers, 30*l.* to 35*l.* ditto; general useful servants, 1*l.* 5*s.* per week; bullock-drivers, on farms, 1*l.* 10*s.* to 2*l.* ditto; ditto for the roads, 2*l.* to 3*l.* ditto; stockkeepers, 50*l.* to 75*l.* per annum; good farm labourers, 1*l.* to 1*l.* 5*s.* per week; sheep-shearers, 20*s.* per 100; ditto washers, 25*s.* to 30*s.* per 100; ploughmen, 1*l.* 10*s.*; gardeners, 75*l.* to 100*l.* per annum; cooks, male, 1*l.* 10*s.* to 3*l.* per week; waiters, 1*l.* 10*s.* to 1*l.* 15*s.* ditto; grooms, 60*l.* to 70*l.* per annum.

"The weekly rations consist of 10 lbs. flour, 10 lbs. beef or mutton, 2 lbs. sugar, and ¼ lb. tea.

"Without rations: — Compositors, 2*s.* 6*d.* per thousand; ditto 7*l.* 7*s.* per week; good house-carpenters, town work, 1*l.* to 1*l.* 5*s.* per day; masons, 1*l.* to 1*l.* 5*s.* ditto; plasterers, 1*l.* 5*s.* to 1*l.* 10*s.* ditto; bricklayers, 1*l.* to 1*l.* 5*s.*; woodsplitters and fencers, 12*s.* 6*d.* per load;

blacksmiths, for country work and shoeing, 1*l.* per day; labourers on the roads, with wood, water, and tent accommodation, 10*s.* per day.

"Seamen:—For London, for the run home, 25*l.* to 30*l.*; Calcutta, 20*l.* to 25*l.*; Callao, 20*l.* to 25*l.*; coasting, 6*l.* per month.

"Female Servants:—Thorough servants, 30*l.* to 35*l.* per annum; housemaids, 20*l.* to 25*l.* ditto; laundresses, 40*l.* to 52*l.* ditto; nursemaids, 20*l.* ditto; cooks, 45*l.* to 100*l.*

"In order to confirm the statements previously made as to the relation of receipts and expenditure on the part of working men, we have made inquiries as to the actual receipts and expenditure of those engaged on railways and public works of a similar description. The wages are 10*s.* to 12*s.* per diem, the decided majority, perhaps three-fourths of the whole, receiving the higher rate. The men live in tents free, wood and water costs nothing, and an ample supply of good food, including fresh meat three times a day, need not exceed 15*s.* per week. They can thus lay by between 2*l.* and 3*l.* weekly. This calculation has reference to single men. But those who have wives are in no worse position, as the services of females in cooking, washing, mending, &c., are in great request. For labour of this description there is likely to be a great demand throughout the summer, and indeed for a twelvemonth to come.

"The state of the labour market may be ascertained from the rates of wages quoted, and from the following 'Wanteds' which have appeared within these few days in the local papers:—'500 pick and shovel men, 10*s.* to 12*s.* per day, tent, tools, wood, and water;' '500 stonebreakers, 6*s.* to 10*s.* per yard, tents,' &c. Such advertisements appear daily, and, taken in connection with the fact that tolerable workmen can break from two to three yards every day, indicate the attainment of a really comfortable maintenance, and a respectable weekly balance, at even this the least skilled and simplest kind of labour."

THE END.

LONDON:
A. and G. A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-street-Square.